

FOUR ROADS TO HAPPINESS



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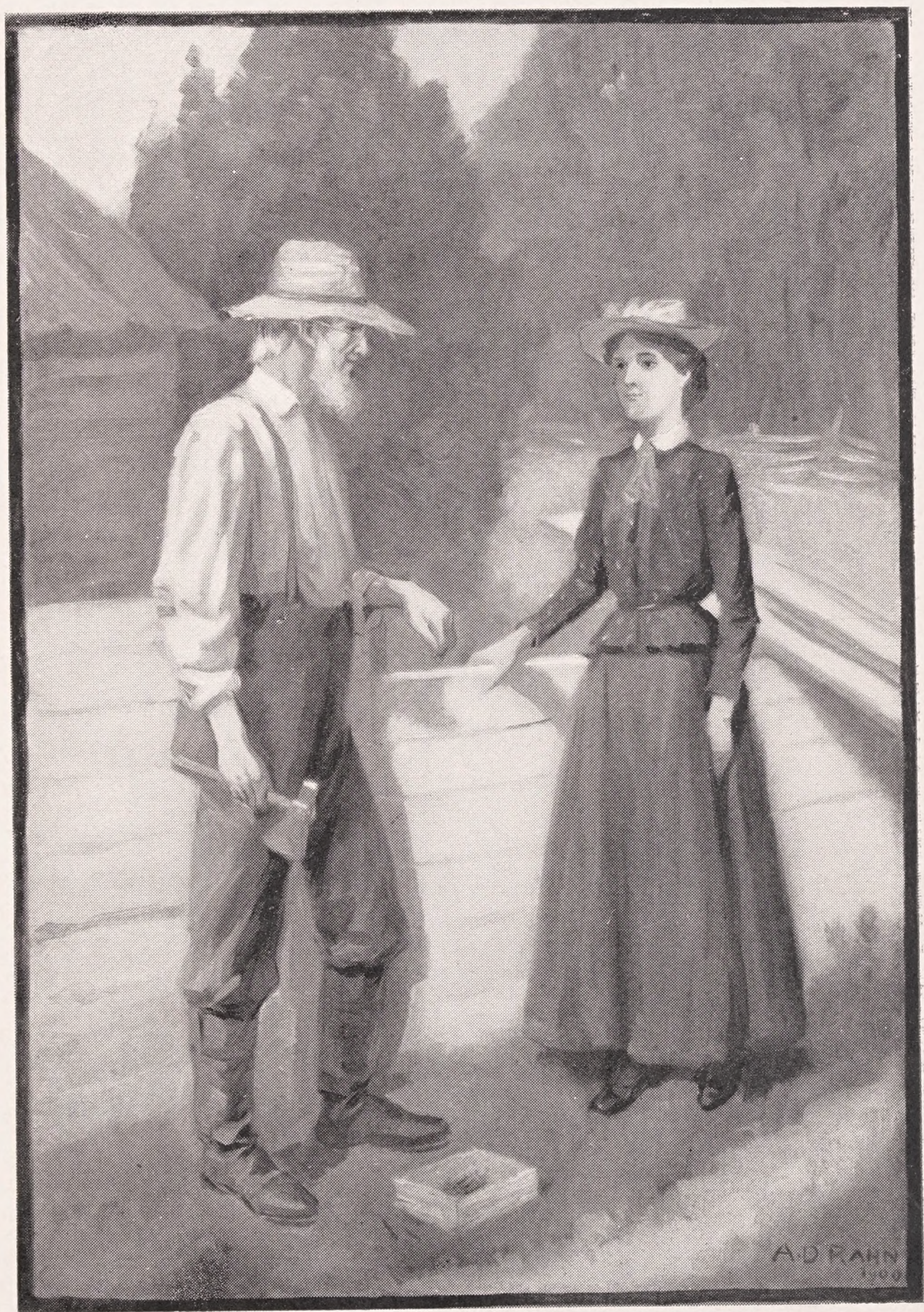
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“He straightened up and looked at her.”

p. 108.

Frontispiece.

FOUR ROADS TO HAPPINESS

A Story of Hoosier Life

BY

MARY McCRAE CULTER



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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. A Thorn in the Flesh	7
II. The Good in Evil Things	17
III. A Glimpse into the World	27
IV. The Way of the World	36
V. A Wonderful World	46
VI. Summer Tasks	56
VII. Winter Employments	66
VIII. Wealth has Wings	76
IX. The First Journey	86
X. "The Wisdom from Above"	96
XI. In "Deestrect No. 12"	107
XII. Aspirations	116
XIII. The Shadow of Death	126
XIV. A Glimpse Upward	137
XV. Her New Ambition	147
XVI. Susie's Desires	158
XVII. Two Hundred Miles Apart	168
XVIII. A Bit of Student Life	178
XIX. Improved Opportunities	188
XX. The Curriculum of Suffering	198
XXI. What is Happiness?	208
XXII. Backwoods Pleasures	219
XXIII. A Service of Love	229
XXIV. An Unforeseen Trouble	239
XXV. An Accepted Cross	251
XXVI. A Rash Step	261
XXVII. Two Conclusions	272
XXVIII. Home Again	282
XXIX. At Maplewood	292
XXX. The End of the Roads	303

Life.

“This one thing will I do—most gratefully,
I will accept the life God gives to me,
And wear it proudly, wear it patiently.

“Moulded and fashioned by his mighty hand,
He gives to me the life that he has planned,
And bids me take and see and understand.

“Among the millions of eternity,
Plain as thou art, there is no one like thee.
O life, I bow before thee reverently.

“High privilege—a gift so rare to take.
So I accept it, and for thy great sake
Of this, the life thou givest, the best will make.”

Four Roads to Happiness.

CHAPTER I.

A THORN IN THE FLESH.

SCHOOL was out at the Yankee Jim school-house, and the pupils were scattering along the wooded paths that led to their respective homes. There were many merry words and much laughter and play. There were games of tag, and races by the fleet-footed. Some of the younger ones stopped at a thicket of sas-safras to gather handfuls of the twigs to chew. One or two of the girls had skipping-ropes made from slender green-briar vines, and were skipping along the road. A group of the smaller boys stopped for a final game of marbles. Altogether, the progress of the young students was slow.

As they went on, their numbers gradually diminished. The Barker children turned off at "the forks"; the Rogers went down their

home lane; the Simmonses disappeared down a narrow wood-path, and the four Carter children proceeded on their way alone.

Will Carter was the oldest of the four. He was a sturdy looking boy about sixteen years of age, dressed in a homemade suit of bright blue jeans, and a cap manufactured in some mysterious fashion from a 'coon skin. His trousers were tucked into his boots, his cap was perched on the back of his head, his hands were thrust into his pockets, and he whistled loudly as he walked along.

His sister Jane walked beside him, and was quite as rustic in appearance as he, in her home-woven linsey dress of red and blue plaid, her dark calico apron and heavy shoes. She had hair which in polite society would have been called auburn, but which in the backwoods was bluntly termed red. Her eyes were dark, and her face was thickly freckled. She carried several books under her left arm, and swung her sunbonnet by the strings as she walked along.

Kate and Sue, the two younger sisters, amused themselves with their skipping-rope, and were soon far ahead of Will and Jane.

The road along which they passed would have been considered lonely by city children. The schoolhouse they had left was situated in

the edge of heavy timber. From there the road led down past the old church and the dreary briar-grown graveyard, and on past the parsonage, which bore the distinction of being the only frame dwelling-house in the neighborhood, and up a little hill into the dense woods again. Great oak, beech, hickory and ash trees interlaced their branches above the road. A thicket of saplings and hazel bushes, overhung with a net of wild-grape and green-briar vines, extended close to the wheel tracks in places. Here and there lay the decaying trunk of some huge monarch of the forest which had been overthrown by a long-forgotten tornado. Stumps of all sizes and descriptions were to be seen everywhere.

It was curious to note how the road wound itself between them, turning this way and that, crossing their exposed roots, even passing over some of the smaller ones. It required a good driver to take a wagon safely over such a road and avoid all these obstacles. The rate of travel was necessarily slow, and a "three-minute horse" would have had no chance whatever to show off his paces. Driving at night was out of the question, unless there was clear moonlight; so walking was the customary mode of travel.

The Carter children thought nothing of

their two-mile trip to and from school, so accustomed were they to walking long distances. It is almost needless to add that they did not appreciate the wild beauty of the scenery through which they passed. The younger ones were too busy with their play. Will saw only cord-wood, rails and shingles in the great oak, beech and poplar trees, or the possibilities for good hoop poles in the hickory saplings by the way.

Jane felt a vague stirring of joy as she looked up at the blue spring sky that showed in tiny patches through the brown lacework of limbs and twigs above her, or noted the pleasing effect of the white and grey lichens against their background of brown log and green moss. She possessed considerable poetic and artistic talent, only it was buried beneath a weight of ignorance that prevented its development. There was little chance that she ever would see beyond the confines of her narrow home district, or know the possibilities that lay dormant within her brain. She was a bright, energetic girl, quick to learn and ambitious to lead her classes in school. She delighted in the speed with which she could travel over several miles, and knew no fear even though night fell heavily about her, and the road grew indistinct beneath her feet, and

screech-owls sent their melancholy cries from the blackness of the forest above her. At home she took pride in her ability to do all manner of work, and in the "spryness" with which all her tasks were accomplished. She was fifteen years of age, but was tall for her years and was often taken to be older than her brother.

A new thought had taken possession of her, on this afternoon, and she was considering it diligently as she walked along. Presently she said,

"Will, stop your whistling; I want to talk to you."

"Talk away," returned Will, cheerfully. "I can listen and whistle too."

"But I can't talk while you whistle, because I'm not sure that you're listening."

"Very well, then; go ahead; I'm all ears."

"Well," Jane said, slowly. "I've made up my mind that I'm going to be a school-teacher."

"Oh, shucks!" interrupted her listener, unsympathetically. "I thought you was going to tell me what Lize Free said about havin' their carpet-rag sewin'."

"She said they was goin' to have it next Friday night, and they're a-goin' to pull taffy after the rags are all sewed. An' she gave us

a bid. So there!" Jane returned ungraciously. She had been so sure of Will's interest in her new scheme that his preference to "rag-sewin's" was vexing. Her brother noted her vexation, and, as his anxiety in regard to the "bid" to the rag-sewing was relieved, he good-humoredly returned to Jane's subject.

"What makes you want to teach school? I don't think I'd like it. I'm always glad when plowin' time comes and I can quit."

"But then school-teachers make lots of money. Mr. James gets forty dollars a month, and he says ever so many of them get more. I could make more money in six months than you and pap do off the farm and in the cooper-shop in a year. And then we could have lots of things."

"What would we have now? Let's see. You might buy me a new jack-knife. I broke the best blade of mine to-day," began Will, teasingly: whereupon Jane slapped him vigorously with her sunbonnet until he cried for mercy.

"I was only fooling," Will said, after their good-humored scuffle was over. "I think it would be just fine if you could teach school. You're plenty smart enough, only you'll have to study a heap before you can git a certificate."

"Yes, I know," returned Jane eagerly. "I talked to Mr. James about it all noon-time. He says I know enough arithmetic and history and geography to pass now; but I'll have to study physiology, and get a good deal further in my grammar. I can read and spell pretty well, and my handwriting is tolerably fair. You see, it won't be a very hard task, and besides I'm not old enough yet. I'll have a year to study, anyhow, and I'm just going at it in earnest." Jane's cheeks were flushed, and her eyes sparkled with ambition. "Mr. James is going to bring me his physiology to-morrow, and I'm going to begin right away. I'll recite at noons while the rest of you are out at play." Will looked at her admiringly.

"I believe you are in earnest," he said.

"Indeed I am," Jane replied. "I'm tired of being so poor and working so hard for so little. If there's a pile of money to be had just by doing some extra studying, why, I'm going to study." They walked a little way in silence, then Will said, hesitatingly:

"There's one trouble about your teaching school, and that is, you get mad too easy."

"I don't get mad any quicker'n you do," flashed Jane, and her brother laughed heartily.

"There it is. Don't you see, Janie? It wouldn't do for a school-teacher to be so

touchy as that. Scholars are always doin' mean things, an' sayin' hateful things, an' the old folks are always a findin' fault with the teacher, an' between 'em, you'd be in hot water all the time." This cool speech made Jane very angry. She was exceedingly touchy on the subject of her high temper. She was well aware of the fact that she was entirely too hasty, and often wished secretly that she were better-natured; but she always excused it by saying:

"It's all on account of this horrid red hair. I can't help myself. It's in me, and it's no use to try to get it out, because I can't."

So now, in reply to Will's criticism, she said:

"Well, I can't help it. It's no use for red-headed people to try to be good-natured, because they can't."

"Temper's a good deal like the briars in our 'little field.' The roots are there, and they keep a springin' up. If we didn't keep hoein' 'em down, they'd soon cover the whole patch an' we couldn't raise nothin' on it. It seems to me that's the way you need to do with your temper, jest keep hoein' it down, and mebbe you'll kill it out after while."

Jane was so angry over this very sensible advice that she would not speak a word to her

brother during the remainder of their walk homeward. Will was so accustomed to such passions on her part that he paid no attention to it, but turned his thoughts to the more congenial subject of the rag-sewing in prospect. Yet the good seed had been sown in Jane's unwilling mind. As they passed the "little field" she furtively observed the briars that poked obtrusively between the rails and nodded their heads at her as much as to say, "Here we are, and you can't get rid of us." Their derision seemed so plain to her that she glanced slyly at Will to see if he had noted it; but his eyes were fixed upon a squirrel that was jumping lightly from branch to branch in a tall tree on the opposite side of the road, and the briars were entirely beneath his notice.

As Jane went about her work that evening, her thoughts were absorbed in the one all-important subject of the study in store for her. To her credit, be it said, the material advantages to be gained from the money to be earned were put aside as too far in the future to be considered. The more important question was in regard to the preparation necessary to accomplish her purpose.

"It'll be time enough to spend the money after I've got it. I don't know now what I'll want then," she very sensibly said to herself.

All the time, Will's advice kept ringing in her ears. She could but acknowledge the wisdom of it. She could plainly see what a hindrance her hasty spirit would be, and how it would stand in the way of her success. She could recall instances of teachers in her home school who had gained the ill-will of all the pupils by their disagreeable tempers.

"I guess I'll have to go to hoein', as Will said, tho' it seems like a pretty hopeless job. I'm bound to be a teacher, and I'm bound to succeed, temper or no temper. Mebbe it'll be easier when I know I daresn't get mad," was her final reflection for the day.

CHAPTER II.

THE GOOD IN THINGS EVIL.

THE rest of the school term passed swiftly by, but ere its close Jane felt that she had made good progress toward the much-desired teacher's certificate. She had done diligent and thorough work in the branches in which she was most deficient, and rigorously reviewed the more familiar studies. Before he left the district, Mr. James advised her to take up the study of physical geography and of civil government, and suggested that perhaps the Rev. Mr. Davidson had text-books which he would be willing to loan her. He assured her that she would not find either branch hard, and he thought that she might learn much during the summer, if she would do systematic work and have regular hours for her studies. This Jane resolved to do, and at the first opportunity went to the parsonage to see if she could obtain the desired books.

The minister was a man who was himself an enthusiastic student, and much interested in any one who showed any desire to advance

in knowledge. Therefore, Jane met with a cordial reception, and her shy request for the loan of books was warmly received. The minister took her to his study and allowed her to examine his library, which seemed wonderful in size to the ignorant girl. He produced the very books she needed, and told her if at any time she found difficulties in her studies to come to him and he would be glad to assist her. Then he held a long conversation with her on the subject of education. He pointed out the disadvantages as well as the advantages to be gained by study.

Said he: "An education is a power either for good or evil. It may make you a blessing or a curse to the community in which you live, according to the way you use it. It is an added responsibility, for it widens the sphere of your influence, and gives you a power over others which must affect them one way or another. Your opinions, as an educated woman, will bear great weight with others; and woe will be to you and them if you are on the wrong side. Give me your civil government for a moment, and I will write on the fly-leaf a Bible truth that should be engraved on the wall of every college and school in the land. It is the divine estimate of education." Jane handed him the book and he wrote,

“The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I might know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.” (Isa. 50 : 4.)

“I want you to read that frequently, and whenever you do, remember that it does not mean merely the *very learned*, but *all of us, as far as we know*. We think when studying that we are working for our own benefit alone, but the Lord does not intend it so. If you want to be truly successful, Jane, you must make your education count first for the Lord, and after that for yourself.”

It was a very serious-faced girl that left the study. This was a new view of education, and she was not right sure that she liked it. She had an undefined feeling that serving the Lord was a business that did not pay very well in dollars and cents, and money was certainly the thing she was after. She almost wished that she had not started out to try to obtain an education if it was to be such a very serious thing as Mr. Davidson made out. She was glad to find his wife out in the yard, that her thoughts might be diverted from the uncomfortable channel into which the minister had led them.

Mrs. Davidson was working busily at her flower-beds, planting the tiny seeds in some,

setting out bulbs or house-plants in others. She was an enthusiastic lover of flowers, and quite successful in their culture. Her beds were marvels of bloom all summer long, and her yard was the admiration of the whole country. She looked up brightly as Jane went over to where she was working.

"I'm deep in the dirt again, you see, Janie."

"Yes," the girl answered, "but one does not mind working in the dirt when she can have such beautiful flowers as you do to pay for it."

"That is true," replied the lady. "He who is afraid of soiling his hands will never reap a beautiful harvest. It is true about a good many things beside raising flowers, isn't it?"

"I guess so. I don't know," replied Jane. The truth was too broad for her to grasp it all at once.

"Would my flowers grow if I did not plant and dig and water them?"

"Of course not."

"If you did not study hard could you hope to obtain an education?"

"No, ma'am." Jane could understand this sort of reasoning.

"It is just so with everything worth having in this life. If we want it we must work for it. Yet there are thousands of people who sit

down to wait for good and pleasant things to come to them, and complain because the Lord does not send what they desire. Our good fortune is always ahead of us. We will never enjoy it if we sit down and wait for it to catch up with us. It is good that it is so, for it makes hard or disagreeable work easier to endure. We are all the time looking ahead for the reward."

"But sometimes the reward doesn't come," objected Jane, thinking of some of the tasks in which she took no pleasure.

"Are you right sure about that?" questioned Mrs. Davidson. "A great writer has said, 'The reward of a thing well done is to have done it.' Is there not a satisfaction that comes with every task that is rightly done? Take dish-washing for an example, as that is a task which every girl dislikes. If your dishes are bright and your glasses clear, and you arrange them neatly on the shelves, don't you enjoy looking at them, even though you know that the work will all have to be done over again in a few hours?"

"Yes," Jane answered, emphatically. "I just love to stand off and look at my closet shelves after I get them all fixed. It's worth all the trouble it takes."

"Then is not that a reward in itself? I

think one reason why our daily tasks seem so hard is because we do not watch for the reward that accompanies each one, and so often miss it entirely. We keep looking for some great blessing after awhile, and overlook the little blessings that God offers to us every hour of our lives. There is no life so hard or so barren that it contains no blessing. There is something there, if the one who lives, will keep his eyes open to see it."

Silence fell between them. Jane did not know how to answer such arguments as these, and Mrs. Davidson was very willing to let the good seed she had sown sink down in the girl's heart. Presently Jane said, wistfully,

"I wish we had such a yard as this. One could take some pleasure in it and in working to make it beautiful. But our yard is filled with those horrid old stumps, and there's no use to try to do anything with it."

"Now, Janie, do you know I would really like to have some of your stumps in my yard? Some of those old rotten-hearted ones would make beautiful flower-pots. I would fill them with earth and plant my flowers in the top and train vines over the sides, until they would be real ornaments. Why, child, you have possibilities for beauty in your yard that no one else has. Why don't you make the

most of your old stumps?" The lady's enthusiasm was so real that it was contagious. Jane's eyes flashed. Her brain had caught the idea, and her artistic instinct seized upon it.

"I don't see why I didn't think of that myself. Why, I can just make them lovely! There's ground ivy, and cypress, and morning glories, and those little gourd vines that would cover them beautifully, and make them all different. And then there's ever so many kinds of flowers to plant in the tops. Nearly every one of them is hollow. Why, I can have just a lovely yard, and there's nobody can have one exactly like it," she cried.

"If you want to try it, I'll help you a little. I saved a great deal of seed from my flowers last year, and I can give you a number of kinds that would grow nicely in that rich earth," Mrs. Davidson said; and opening her seed-box she proceeded at once to make up some tiny parcels of the precious seeds. "You see, Janie," she said, as she worked, "your ugly stumps were among the blessings you were missing. They are ugly and undesirable as they now stand, but since you cannot get rid of them, you will have to beautify them. They are disadvantages that can be turned into advantages if you are willing to work a little to accomplish it. We might make our

lives beautiful—as well as our yards—if we would follow this rule. Whenever we find anything undesirable in them, if we cannot remove it, we might turn it into an added beauty.” Jane looked very skeptical over that assertion.

“Out of our ugly disappointments may spring the blossoms of patience; out of trial comes hope; out of ill temper may grow a crown of peace; and out of hardship may come cheerfulness. Do you not see, my dear, how these things may add to the beauty of our characters? I think the Lord must have meant something like this when he said: ‘Be content *with such things as ye have.*’ Make the most and the best possible out of them. There now. Here are six different kinds of seeds, and I am going to look for some very beautiful stumps in your yard. You mustn’t disappoint me.”

Jane took the seeds with many thanks, and hastened toward her home. The lady looked after her with wistful eyes. “May the good seed spring up in her heart, and bear flowers of beauty and fruit of good deeds,” she murmured as she turned back to her work.

A tumult of thoughts surged through Jane’s mind as she walked swiftly over the familiar road that led to her home. She was planning

where she would plant each kind of the flower seeds, and what vine would look best with each one. She knew there were a number of delicate wild vines in the woods with which she could increase her variety.

"Then there are the ferns," she cried, as she caught sight of a delicate fern uncurling beneath the sunny side of a protecting log. "There are ever so many kinds, and they will look lovely. Mrs. Davidson hasn't any ferns in her yard. I wonder how she happened to forget them. She'll have some after she sees mine, I know."

She walked along in happy silence, while graver thoughts began to crowd themselves forward.

"Be content with such things as ye have," she murmured. "Seems like there are not very many things in my life worth having. There's nothing but hard work and poverty and no chance to be anybody or do anything."

"Stumps," whispered conscience.

"I wonder whether they are," she answered, reflectively. "They certainly are ugly enough and disagreeable enough to be the worst kind of stumps; and they are about like these old things along the road here. Some of them are right in the track, and some of them have roots that stick out and make bad jolts for

whoever comes this way—*but the road goes on in spite of them.*”

She was almost at the stile at home before she reached her final reflection.

“I do wonder whether my bad temper is a stump?”

CHAPTER III.

A GLIMPSE INTO THE WORLD.

IN the Carter home, an unexpected visitor arrived one afternoon. A visitor was a rarity that set the whole household in a flutter at any time; but this visitor was one of extraordinary importance to the Carters; hence some excitement.

Years previous, Mr. Carter's younger brother had run away from his backwoods home, and had been swallowed up by the wonderful West. For many years no tidings had come from him, and his relatives believed he was dead. Indeed, he had been practically forgotten. Now, unannounced, he had returned on a visit to his boyhood home, and his relatives were overwhelmed by his wealth and magnificence. As proof of his wealth, he wore "store clothes" of a quality and style unknown to the jeans-clad inhabitants of the Poplar Ridge district. Then he had wonderful Burnside whiskers and barber-cut hair. He wore russet shoes, and carried a gold watch attached to a veritable gold chain.

But his clothes were not more impressive than his manner and his conversation. He was brisk, and energetic, and alert. His tones had a vigorous, hearty ring; and when he laughed, which he did frequently, he laughed with all his might. In spite of all his magnificence and his superior knowledge, he was unaffected and genuinely affectionate. He was overjoyed to be once more in his boyhood's home, and to look upon familiar scenes that had changed so little during the years of his absence. At first, his brother's family were awkward and ill-at-ease in his presence; but his hearty, kindly manner soon won their affection. He praised Mrs. Carter's salt-rising bread and thick apple-butter, and enjoyed them so much that her housewifely fears were set aside, and she concluded he was "jest as common as anybody," and became friendly accordingly.

The four children hung entranced on his stories of life in the fabled West. He told of how he had worked his way as roustabout on a steamboat to St. Louis. In that city, by some means, he found his way to the stockyards where he met a cattle-man from Kansas. This man had been struck by his appearance, and persuaded him to go to his ranch and work as a cowboy. The offer of forty dollars a month had seemed fabulous wealth to the

backwoods boy who had thought a dollar a large sum of money, and he had eagerly accepted the job.

“But,” he added, seriously, “that forty dollars did not look so big to me when I got fairly to work. I found that I would earn every cent of it, and it wouldn’t be easy work either. The bookstores and the flashy papers are full of stories that make boys crazy to lead a cowboy’s life. They fill it full of dash, and adventure, and all that sort of thing; but these stories are written by fellows that don’t know what a cowboy’s life is. I doubt whether any of ’em ever lived west of the Mississippi river, and I’ll venture to say that the most of ’em never lived outside a big city. There are plenty of boys as foolish as I was, who will run away from good homes to lead a story-book life. When they get out on the plains they find how badly they have been deceived. The hardships, and trials, and privations of a cowboy’s life are never written in stories. They wouldn’t sound well.

“When I reached the ranch I found I had got into a hard berth. There were a lot of other fellows there, and they were toughs. They were fellows who wouldn’t be satisfied to sit down and lead an ordinary, steady life. They liked the dare-deviltry of the life they

led. They drank and swore; they played cards and told rough stories, and read low novels. Their highest ambitions were to be counted the most daring rider of bucking bronchos, and the most skilful hand with a lasso. They went through all sorts of hardships and dangers for the sake of big wages. When they could get to some town they would spend every cent in a big spree, and go back penniless to their rough, hard work. Of course there are occasional exceptions to this description, but I am talking of cowboys as I found them.

“As I was a ‘backwoods tenderfoot,’ I was considered a fair subject for sport by the boys among whom I found myself. They told me outrageous lies, which I was simple enough to believe. My acting upon them got me into some hard and dangerous experiences, which only added to the amusement of my associates. The hardest task, the most vicious broncho, always fell to my share.

“I tell you, there’s no romance in a cowboy’s life when it comes down to the real, hard facts of the case. Sometimes the cattle would become unruly, or frightened, and would stampede. Then there was hard work for all of us, no matter what the weather might be until they were under control again. Sometimes

one of those long-horned Texan steers would get mad with rage, and woe to the cowboy that happened to be in his way. If there was no place where he could take refuge, or if he had no 'shooting irons,' it was all up with him. Many a poor fellow has been rolled in a blanket and buried in an unmarked grave, and his friends never knew what became of him. Most people think cowboys carry pistols just for fun, or because they are desperadoes. I tell you the ready revolver is the only thing that saves many a poor fellow from the horns of an angry brute.

"I can't begin to tell you all the things I went through in the year I stayed on that ranch. One time, I remember, we were away out on the ranch and our water supply gave out. We drove for miles, but found all the water-holes dried up by the drouth. The cattle grew wild with thirst, and we were almost perishing ourselves. Every man's tongue was swollen out of his mouth and cracked open for lack of water. The poor beasts were in even a worse condition than we were. You cannot imagine the tortures we suffered, nor how utterly exhausted we grew as we rode on and on and on in search of water. The thoughts of the big spring here at home were torment to me then. I would gladly have given my

year's wages for one drink from the cool stream. Numbers of our cattle dropped by the way. We, ourselves, were almost dead men before water was reached. I don't like to think of it. The very memory is painful. I only tell it to you as an instance of what cow-boys really have to endure. No sensible boy would ever leave a good home, for such a life as this, if he could look ahead, and see what he would have to experience.

"I only stayed on the ranch a year. I wouldn't drink or gamble, and the boys did not like me on account of it. They called me stingy and unsociable, and did everything they could to make my life miserable. I drew very little of my wages until the end of the year, and then I had enough to start out for myself. I took up a claim, lived in a dug-out with a sod roof, worked hard and saved every cent I could. What I made I invested in stock, and that increased of itself. As I was able I improved my land and bought more. Now I have six hundred and forty acres, well-improved and well-stocked. I have been fortunate; still my good fortune has not been what people call luck. I don't believe in luck. A man, or for that matter any one, has got to work hard and faithfully if he wants to get ahead. He has got to save his money, and not spend it for un-

necessary things merely because he would like to have them. He must be honest, and he must be industrious. Above all, he must let whiskey and tobacco and cards alone. Then he may hope for success."

With such stories as these Mr. William Carter entertained his nephew and nieces, who listened with unconcealed amazement. Such wonderful ideas as these had never before entered their heads. Their uncle's possessions seemed boundless.

"Six hundred and forty acres of land!" Will exclaimed. "What does he do with all of it? Ten acres is all pap and I can work."

"And two hundred cattle and as many hogs! Did you ever! I'd hate to have to milk that many cows and feed all them hogs," added Jane, whose ideas had not expanded sufficiently for her to understand the difference between stock cattle and milk cows, nor to realize that women did not do that sort of work in Kansas.

Their uncle's descriptions of machines that would plant corn and wheat and potatoes seemed to them too wonderful to be true. They looked at their little fields dotted with rocks and stumps, and shook their heads over his accounts of great gang-plows drawn by six horses. One horse was all their father ever used in plowing his fields, and their corn and

potatoes were dropped by hand and covered by a hoe.

Altogether, this visit was an era in the history of these people whose lives had moved in the same old groove for years, and to whom no such excitement as this had ever come.

Mr. William Carter did not stop merely with stories of his own good fortune. He kindly inquired into his brother's financial condition, and with brotherly kindness paid off a mortgage that had harassed the souls of the Carter family for several years. It was only a hundred dollars, but it had seemed a hopelessly large amount to these people whose living had to be made from ten acres of yellow clay soil, and what little else they could make from butter, eggs and chickens. The little cooper-shop had added a small amount to their very small income, and thus they had managed to live.

Mr. Peter Carter was a shiftless sort of man who had been content to live along the same narrow way as had his father and grandfather before him, and had never felt his limitations because he did not know them. He made no improvements, because he felt the need of none. When his rail fences became too rotten to stand up, he put new rails in the same places. One horse, two cows and a couple of hogs comprised the usual amount of live-stock

kept on his farm. Corn-bread, bacon and "tree-molasses" were the staple articles of food. In short, he lived as hundreds of people did then, as hundreds of people do to-day, among the solitudes of the Hoosier hills.

To Mr. William Carter, fresh from the rushing activity of the West, such inertia seemed incredible and unendurable. He tried in vain to arouse his brother's ambition and inspire him to more energetic action.

"He is too old, and his habits have become fixed," he said at last. "I will have to see what I can do with the children. Their lives yet lie before them, and for them there is hope for something better than this mere existence. What good, what pleasure can they have in such a life as this? I am sorry for them. I cannot bear to have their lives wasted as the lives of their parents have been. They might as well never have been born. The world does them no good, and is none the better for their living in it. It's a pity they are not all boys. There isn't much chance for girls in the world. If they can make a living for themselves they will do pretty well. But a boy can do anything, and make money in a hundred ways. I'm glad I was born a boy."

CHAPTER IV.

THE WAY OF THE WORLD.

“WHAT are you going to do with this young man?” asked Mr. William Carter one day, as he laid his hand on Will’s shoulder.

“Do with him? Why nothin’,” answered his brother, hardly comprehending the question.

“Are you going to keep him here in the backwoods to grub briars and hammer barrels, or are you going to let me take him out West and teach him how to make money?” was the next startling question.

“Why—I dunno,” deliberated Mr. Peter Carter. “I can’t see but he’d do fairly well here. I’ve allus managed to make a livin’ here, an’ dad allus did, an’ what’s been good enough for us ort to be good enough for him. What ’ud he do with a hull lot of money ef he had it? After you’ve got vittles an’ clo’es, what else is there? Seems to me, a hull lot of money ’ud be a hull lot of bother.”

“There’s considerable difference even in food and clothes,” returned his brother. “But that

is not all there is in life to enjoy. One likes to have a nice home, and a good farm with plenty of fine, fat stock. I like to look over my great fields and say 'all this is mine. I earned every foot of it.' Or I enjoy going out among my stock—fine thoroughbreds, most of it—and think how I worked and saved and got it all.

"Then, if one has money he can travel about and see what is in the world. To you who have never been out from among these hills, the world is all hills, and rocks and trees and rail fences and log cabins. You cannot imagine such a place as the one where I live, where one can stand in his door and look for miles in every direction. You do not know what the rest of the world is doing. Whole nations might be swept from the earth, and you would never know it. You do not know what your own government is doing. You go to the polls and vote for the men who are on the ticket handed to you, and you have not the slightest idea, what sort of men they are, nor what your vote may help to do for the country." Mr. William Carter stopped merely for want of breath, and his brother answered slowly,

"Wa-al, supposin' things air as you say, what difference does it make to us? We hain't got

nothin' to do with other nations so long as they let us alone. An' as for the guver'ment; I don't see but we'd git along jest as well without one as with one. It never makes no difference with us, anyway. I quit a-votin' long ago, except for constable, an' roadmaster, an' justice. Them's the only officers as ever done us any good, an' we don't *reely need* them. As for clo'es, I wouldn't want to bother with such as them you've got on. I couldn't breathe easy for fear o' spilin' them, an' I wouldn't care to be so different from ever'body else. I don't need no gold watch, 'cause I kin tell dinner time by the sun. So I don't see but I'm about as well off as you air, an' I don't have to work so hard neither."

Mr. William Carter was so disgusted by this revelation of ignorance and shiftlessness that he could hardly restrain the severe condemnation it deserved. But he was man of the world enough to know that in such cases argument is useless. If a man does not know enough to recognize his own needs, he does not know enough to be convinced by any amount of argument that others are better off than himself. So he tried another line of reasoning.

"Suppose you should happen to die; do you think Will could support the family here?"

"Why, I reckon so. The place 'ud be jest

the same that it allus was. Ef he couldn't git along why Jane could git a place to work out down to the Landing. There's a sight o' lazy women down there as keeps hired girls."

This was worse than ever. Mr. William Carter actually felt ashamed to have to call such a man as this his brother. He turned impatiently to the boy who stood silently beside him.

"And what do you say to all this, Will? Do you want to stay here all your life and never have anything better nor know anything more than is to be found among these stony hills? Don't you want to see something of the world and have some of the things that it holds out to those who will seek for them? Wouldn't you like to wear good clothes, and ride a fine horse, and have money in the bank, and know something of a life worth living?"

The boy was digging vigorously in the soft earth with his clumsy boot heel. His mind was in a turmoil. Such a flood of new ideas had entered his brain in these few days of his uncle's visit that he had been unable to bring order out of the confusion. There was more of his uncle's disposition in the boy than there was of an inclination to follow his father's example. He was weary of grubbing among briars and stones, of chopping wood and split-

ting rails, of cutting hoop poles and hammering barrels. He had reached the age when he had begun to be ambitious to have something of his own. One of his boy friends had lately come into possession of a spirited colt that had filled the minds of all the other boys with envy. They found walking a wearisome task when Martin Cox pranced by them on his lively grey. Now, as Mr. William Carter spoke of wearing good clothes and riding a fine horse, Will thought of the coveted colt. Would he ever own one if he stayed on the little stony farm? Had not his uncle been wise when he left the same old home, and had he not succeeded better than the brother who had stayed?

His uncle studied the boy's face and divined the conflict that was going on in his mind.

"You might go and try it awhile," he urged. "If you do not like western life you can come home at any time, you know. You don't need to be in a hurry to make up your mind, for I want to go up to the city for a week. You can think it over, and talk it over, and decide by the time I come back. There's plenty of work on my farm, and I'll give you good wages. I have no boy of my own, and you are my namesake. I'd like to give you a start in the world, and let you have a chance to

make something of and for yourself. You won't object if the boy wants to go, will you, Peter?"

"Why, I reckon not. He's a-gittin' big enough to do for his self, an' ef he wants to work hard for his livin' why that's his lookout. I 'low he'll be comin' back shortly," replied the father. That ended the conference. That evening, Mr. William Carter departed for the city, and Will settled down to hard thinking.

The Carter home was a log house that stood upon the side of a hill that sloped steeply to the road. There were two rooms in the cabin, and a low loft—reached by a ladder—above them. Beneath the house was a good basement which was used as a kitchen and living room, and was reached only by an outside entrance. This basement was the envy of all the other people of the district, and as it faced toward the road it gave the cabin the appearance of being two stories in height and therefore superior to its neighbors.

Farther up the hill and a little to one side was the barn, a long low structure of logs, covered by a clapboard roof. In the dim past some ancestor of the Carters must have possessed more stock than the present incumbents, and therefore the big barn was built. The one horse and the two cows of the present owner

looked lonesome in their roomy quarters. One end of the barn was used for a cooper-shop, where Will and his father spent their rainy days. Rail fences surrounded the yard and barn lot, and divided the remainder of the farm into two fields—known as “the big field” and “the little field”—although both together contained only ten acres. Across the road from the house was a ten-acre “wood-lot” which was covered by a dense growth of heavy timber. This was the extent of the Carter homestead.

Home had never looked so attractive to Will Carter as it did after his uncle's departure. He could not imagine a spot that was not shut in by hills and trees. He had never been farther from home than the river landing, and even there the view was bounded by the forest-clad hills on the Kentucky shore. He had spent the sixteen years of his life in unreasoning content. Now, the seeds of dissatisfaction had been sown in his heart. His uncle's stories of the wonderful West and its still more wonderful ways had fascinated him, and had filled him with a desire to see these things for himself. His uncle's “fine clothes and gold watch” had failed to arouse his father's envy, but they had filled the boy with a burning desire to possess such things. “The

love of money " had taken hold on his heart, and the pursuit of riches appeared to him the only way to reach happiness. Still, he loved his home and his family. He clung to them, and could hardly make up his mind to leave them. It seemed to him that if once he went out into the great, busy world he would never be able to find his way back to the quiet nook among the hills.

He had been doing up his chores one evening, and after he finished he stood leaning against the big barn door watching Jane milk the cows. It never occurred to him to help her. Milking was strictly a woman's task in that section of the country, and much beneath the dignity of any man or boy.

Suddenly he broke the silence.

"I say, Jane, would you do it?"

"Do what?" asked his sister, without turning her head.

"Go out West."

"Yes, I would," answered Jane, emphatically. "If I had been a boy, it wouldn't have taken me this long to make up my mind. There's nothing here but poverty and hard work. If you stay here you'll never have anything better than you have now, and you'll never know any more. I wish I wasn't a girl. I'd go, too. I want to see something

and know something. I want to be somebody and do something in the world. There isn't any chance here, and there don't seem to be any chance anywhere—for a girl," she added, bitterly.

"But I'm afraid I wouldn't like it and would wish myself back home," objected Will.

"Well, couldn't you come back? There's no law compelling you to stay if you don't like it or can't succeed. But you will like it, and you will succeed, if you just set your head that way." Here it occurred to Jane that her sage advice applied quite as forcibly to herself as it did to Will. She was so overcome by the idea that she forgot the subject in hand and began to consider her own case. Her emphatic words had a decided effect upon her brother.

"I'll go," he said, forcibly. "I'm tired of briars and stones and barrels. I'd like to handle a six-horse plow, and ride a horse of my own. And some day, when I have a farm of my own and a pocketful of money, I'll come back and get you, Janie, and let you see the world too." So it was decided.

When Mr. William Carter returned from the city he found his nephew ready to accompany him to his western home.

And so Will Carter set out into the world, to seek his happiness in the pursuit of riches.

He did not know that "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," but that it lay in being "rich toward God." He had yet to learn through experience, that, "The love of money is the root of all evil."

Therefore, he made this serious mistake at the very starting-point in his career.

CHAPTER V.

A WONDERFUL WORLD.

THOSE who have never lived within the solitudes of the Hoosier hills cannot even imagine the wonder of the boy who had suddenly left them and entered the great outside world. The river steamers were the only means of travel, for the railroad had not penetrated those rocky hills and dense forests.

Mr. William Carter had not forgotten his own far-away experiences, and therefore he took keen pleasure in showing the boy the various wonders through which he was passing and explaining the many things which were new to him. The power of steam and the complication of machinery on the boat filled him with awe. The perfect adjustment of parts, which enabled the pilot with one hand to turn the great boat this way or that, seemed incomprehensible. The handsome saloons were a fairy palace, and the grand piano was a "music machine" that surpassed his wildest dreams. He would have been willing to stay on the boat forever. "Surely," he thought,

"the world has nothing grander than this." He was sorry when St. Louis was reached, and he reluctantly crossed the gang-planks and left the floating palace behind him. It was soon forgotten in the turmoil of the great city.

Mr. William Carter's first care was to improve the external appearance of his nephew, who was so very different from those around him as to attract universal attention. A barber relieved the boy of his shock of "home-cut" hair. "I look like a sheared sheep," Will exclaimed when the operation was over.

"You look more like a man," returned the barber, emphatically.

A complete suit of "store clothes" which, to Will's mind, cost a fabulous price, took the place of the home-woven jeans, and so transformed the boy that he almost lost his own identity. Mr. William Carter looked at him with satisfaction. "Now you look civilized," he said, and Will wondered whether that meant he had previously looked like a savage. He had yet to learn that a large part of the world estimates a man's worth by the coat he wears, and takes little account of the soul that dwells under it. His uncle was one of this class. His god was money, his sole happiness the adding of acre to acre and dollar to dollar. He was so engrossed with the "cares of this

world and the deceitfulness of riches " that he never looked above or beyond them for higher and eternal good.

A few hours later the railroad train was whirling the travelers westward. For a while Will was so terrified by the speed at which they were going that he could not heed the wonders by the way. After a few stops at stations he became convinced that the engineer had his machine under perfect control, so he breathed easier and began to look about him.

Broad stretches of prairie opened out to view. The hills and forests gradually disappeared, and when Kansas was finally reached his amazement was boundless. Immense fields of green wheat stretched away on either hand. Men were plowing with four and six-horse teams in fields where there were neither rocks nor stumps, and turning up such black soil as he had never seen.

"Where are the fences?" he asked his uncle. "How do they tell where one farm ends and another begins? The roads go right through the fields, and they all go straight. How can they tell one road from another?" They were childish questions for such a great boy to ask, but many a grown person has thought the same things when viewing the prairies for the first time.

At Wichita the travelers were met by one of Mr. Carter's hired men, and the remainder of the journey was completed in what Will felt sure must be the most luxurious carriage that could be made, and behind horses which put Martin Cox's grey to shame. He had never seen such clean-limbed, shapely animals as these, with their delicate nostrils and ears, proudly arched necks and flowing tails. Would he ever be the happy possessor of such a team?

His uncle's home proved to be a large frame house, situated on an eminence which commanded a view of the country for many miles around. Houses were to be seen on every hand, each surrounded by its little grove and orchard, its straw-covered stables and granaries. Windmills flashed their white wheels in the breeze. Away off to the south the Ninnescah river wound its crooked way eastward, its course marked by a green line of scrubby elm and cottonwood trees. The mirage rose and fell in vapory waves on the far horizon. The air was clear, the sunshine dazzling. Will looked upward, and wondered at the loftiness of the sky above him. At home it had appeared as a flat surface that almost rested upon the tops of the trees. Here it arched in a vast dome of deepest blue at an

immeasurable distance. But of all things that he saw, the roundness of the world impressed him most deeply. The horizon swept in a circle, without forests or hills to break the perfect outline. Altogether, the boy was dazed by the newness and strangeness of the world in which he now found himself, and it took some time for him to become accustomed to his new life.

Mr. William Carter had but one child, a daughter about fifteen years of age, and Will found her quite as strange as the world in which she lived. She was merry and dashing, fearless and free. She was not bold or loud in manners, yet at the same time she was easy in company and ready in conversation. Will was astonished by the number of things she could do, and the spirit and the alertness with which she did them. He was accustomed to his sister's slow-going ways, and could not but be amazed at this western girl's swiftness. His amazement reached its farthest limit when he saw her walk into the corral one day, bridle a wild little pony, strap a blanket upon its back and then leap lightly upon it. The pony whirled and danced, but the girl seemed to think nothing of it. Will opened the gate for her, and away she flew across the prairie at what he considered a break-neck speed.

"What are you gawking at?" questioned one of the farm hands who happened to be near. "Didn't you ever see a girl ride? Well, you'll get used to that before you've been long in Kansas. Every girl has her pony, and they know how to ride, too. People don't go afoot here, like they do where you came from."

If Will was surprised by his cousin's ways, she was no less interested in his. She was inclined to be amused at first, he was so different from those to whom she had been accustomed.

But her father said, "You must remember, Bessie, that he has spent all his life in a little corner among the woods. The boy is smart enough. All he lacks is a chance to learn. You must help him all you can, for the poor fellow is lonely and no doubt homesick."

Bessie's kind heart was touched. She was a good girl, following the example of her Christian mother, and as a faithful Endeavorer always on the lookout for some work that she might do for the Master whom she served. So now, as she looked at her cousin, she wondered whether the Lord had a special work for her to do in helping him in this his new life.

Will had everything to learn about work in Kansas. Accustomed only to the use of one horse, he could not even harness a team; and

many were the laughs the other farm hands had at his expense. Sometimes he grew so angry and so homesick that he was almost tempted to give up and go back to the familiar solitudes of his Hoosier home.

But the love of money had taken possession of his soul, and he could not bear to give up his twenty dollars a month and go back to grub briars and hammer barrels for a bare living. When discouraged or lonely he would go out and look at his uncle's fine horses, his corrals filled with fattening hogs and steers, his pastures dotted with cattle, and would say to himself, "No, I'll stick it out. He started just as I am, and all this is his. I'll not go back till I have a farm of my own and a pocketful of money."

With such an object as this in view he set earnestly to work to learn the secrets of western money-making. For him, life held nothing greater than the wealth he was striving to win. Following his uncle's advice, as fast as he earned it, every dollar of his wages was put into stock of some kind, and he was surprised to find how fast his investments grew. Sometimes his conscience troubled him because none of his earnings were going to help his homefolks.

Then he would stifle his better nature by

saying, "They don't need it now. They have just as much as they ever had, and would not know what to do with more money. Besides, I am doing all this for them. I must buy feed for my stock, and I must keep it up in good shape, if I want to get ahead. Some day when I get a place of my own, and something ahead, then I can help the homefolks. Anyhow, Jane will soon be ready to teach and then she will make more money than I am getting."

So he settled down to his selfish life, and shirked the duty which was really his by shifting it to Jane's shoulders. His uncle took pride in his diligence and his saving ways. He saw in the boy many of his own characteristics, and took delight in freeing him from all taints of his father's shiftlessness. "Keep on as you have begun, Will, and you'll be as well off as I am before you are my age," he would say encouragingly.

Bessie, however, took a different view of her cousin's actions and disposition. She felt righteously indignant over the selfishness he showed, and his indifference toward those who had a right to expect his assistance. She recognized it as a serious flaw in his character, and was grieved to see that her own father was fostering this bad trait in Will's disposition. She had questioned her cousin closely

in regard to his home and those whom he had left there, and had become deeply interested in his sisters. She knew just how they lived, and how few advantages they possessed. She looked at her well-filled bookshelves, her numerous papers and her dearly beloved piano, and wondered how any girl could live without such things.

“What do they do with their time?” she asked herself. “There is little work on such a tiny farm. There is nowhere for them to go and nothing to do. I don’t believe I could live without my piano and pony.”

Her pity and her piety went hand in hand. It was not enough with Bessie Carter that she felt sorry for any one. She was never satisfied until she did something to help as well. So now, without saying anything to any one, she put some of her spending-money into subscriptions for good papers and a good magazine for these backwoods cousins whom she had never seen. Little did she realize how great her kindness was, nor how much good it was destined to do to those who received it. There was no one to tell her how eagerly the weekly mail-day was looked forward to, nor how willingly Jane trudged three miles and back whenever the day came, that she might receive the precious papers without delay.

Bessie could not see how every word was read, nor know how Jane's mind expanded as it thus came in touch with the great outside world and felt the kindling glow of cultured minds. New ideas were aroused, new thoughts and ambitions awakened, new energies developed by the thoughtful kindness of a girl who "endeavored" to live for her Master's sake.

CHAPTER VI.

SUMMER TASKS.

JANE'S studies were pursued through the summer in a rather irregular fashion. There were many things much more entertaining than dry books, especially such books as Jane found her civil government. There were so many hard words in it, and so many things so far above her understanding, that she found it a difficult study. She held a good many of her father's ideas in regard to the United States government, and was sadly puzzled by the complicated machinery of law which she found mentioned in her book. Such things did not reach into their quiet corner of the Great Republic. They did not even have a weekly newspaper to tell them of the doings of the great, wicked, busy world that lay beyond the boundaries of the wooded hills. The President and Congress and the Constitution were nothing to them. They did not feel their need of them, nor realize that they received any benefit from them. They paid their taxes without the slightest idea why they

did so, or where the money was to be used. Therefore Jane's book was a sad puzzle to her, and it was not long until she cast it aside in despair.

Physical geography was more entertaining, and she enjoyed reading of the wonderful plants, animals and people that were to be found in other parts of the earth. There were parts even of this book which she found beyond her comprehension, simply because her experience and her knowledge were so limited. How could she understand the subject of tides and currents when she had never seen a larger body of water than the stream that gushed from their "big spring"? She needed a good teacher to help her over such hard places.

She would not go to the minister for aid, because she had not liked what he had said to her in regard to the use the Lord expected her to make of her education. Indeed, the text written in the front of her civil government contributed not a little to her dislike of the book. She had a dim idea that "serving the Lord" meant giving up liberty, pleasure and all desirable things for a life of gloomy self-denial and "service."

"No, no. If she could not use education as she chose, and for herself alone, she did not want it. She would not serve anybody, not

even the Lord, of whom she knew very little."

Such things as this she said very positively to herself whenever her eyes chanced to see the troublesome text.

Jane's religious education was even more limited than her secular one. Mr. and Mrs. Carter had professed to "get religion" in their youth, and had joined the church at the time. As years rolled on and family cares increased, they had ceased church-going, and had gradually drifted away from all Christian observances. They kept the Sabbath, after a fashion, inasmuch as no field work and no such tasks as washing or churning were allowed. But beyond that their semblance of religion did not reach. All other tasks went on as usual. All visiting was done on this holy day, or rather holiday. Perhaps, after all, they were not so very much unlike the rest of the world in this respect. Even the cultured, refined, rich world beyond the Hoosier hills largely spells its holy days with an i instead of a y.

The Carter children went to church and Sunday-school if they felt like it, or if their "best clothes" were in a presentable condition. They went because the rest of their companions did, and from a restless desire to

“go somewhere.” No wonder, then, that with no religious training beyond this, Jane could see nothing desirable in serving the Lord. She could not see that her neighbors who professed religion were a bit better off than those who did not. She counted good and ill entirely in proportion to the gain or loss of dollars and cents. Was she very unlike the majority of humanity in this respect?

No civil government, no religious government, only to “do as I please,” this was Jane Carter’s creed. So the civil government with its undesirable religious admonition was put aside. Before half the summer was over, all thought of study had been dropped. There were so many other things of greater importance in Jane’s eyes that the desired teacher’s certificate was almost forgotten.

First in estimation were the once despised stumps. Jane had transformed them into things of beauty, and she never tired of working over her flowers or looking at her pretty yard. She followed Mrs. Davidson’s directions carefully in regard to preparing the earth and planting her seeds, and it was not long until a luxuriance of foliage and blossom repaid her toil. Every unsightly object was removed from the yard, and the ground carefully raked. In return for the removal of

hindering chips, brush and stones, the grateful blue grass spread its carpet over^{*} the bare spots, and turned the whole yard into a verdant place that was fair to look upon. The ugly stumps were hidden by clinging vines and crowded by brilliant blossoms. Ferns flourished in the shady corners, and a row of old-fashioned hollyhocks stood stiffly along the fence, "just like scholars in a spelling-class," Jane said, laughingly. She was very proud of her yard, and was rendered still more happy by the commendation it received from her neighbors and from Mrs. Davidson.

"The ugly stumps have ceased to be ugly, Janie. Are you not glad after all that you have them?" that lady asked the girl one day.

"Indeed I am glad," Jane answered, heartily. "I think now that my yard is nicer than yours."

"Yet you envied me because mine was free from stumps, and would hardly believe that your disadvantages were really your opportunities. Will you not try to apply the beautiful object lesson to all the stumps which you find in your life? If you will take the precious seeds of God's Word and plant them in and around your unpleasant tasks, your disappointments and unfulfilled desires, you will be surprised to find how these things which ap-

pear to mar your life will turn into ornaments that will make it more beautiful."

"I don't know," Jane said, with a shake of her head. "It seems to me a whole lot of money would be better than anything else to cover up the stumps in my life. There's no chance for anything when one is as poor as we are."

"But money alone will not make you happy," urged the lady. "Some of the most miserable people I know have abundance of money, beautiful homes, and seemingly everything that heart could desire, and yet they are not satisfied. Wealth brings troubles and cares and temptations and annoyances of which the poor know nothing. I am afraid, Janie, you are coveting somebody else's doorway."

Jane laughed.

"It's a very pretty one, anyway," she returned.

Mrs. Davidson answered gently, "There is a text in the Bible that says, 'Who hath despised the day of small things?' It is the little things that go to make up our lives. Very few of us have large opportunities and favoring circumstances. We have to make the most of the little things that come to us, and turn our stumbling-blocks into stepping-stones to

help us on our way. And, after all, the most beautiful promises of God are 'to him that overcometh.'"

Jane did not know what answer to make to this. The very mention of the Bible stopped her mouth. It might as well have been printed in the original languages for all the good it was to her. She did not even want to hear about it. She had the uncomfortable feeling that it was a book of harsh commands and unpleasant forbiddings. Therefore she always relapsed into silence when Mrs. Davidson began quoting from it. The lady was wise enough to know when she had said enough. She never talked with the girl without leaving some bit of gospel truth for her to ponder over, and it was always some bit that was so very applicable to the case that Jane could not forget it.

After Will went away with his uncle Jane was very lonely for a time. She had not realized how much she valued her brother's companionship and help. His absence meant more than this to Jane. Somebody had to take his place in the field, and this work fell mostly on her. Her mother and the two younger girls could manage the housework, the care of the milk and making of butter; so Jane was delegated to help her father. There were potatoes

and corn to be dropped and covered by a hoe; briars and weeds to cut, the garden to make and many such jobs to be done. Will had dropped into his father's slow, shiftless ways which were quite at variance with Jane's more energetic nature. She was so much more speedy and accurate than her brother that her father was surprised by the difference.

"It's a pity you hain't a boy, Janie. You could work all around Will ef you only had his strength. I declare, it's a plum pity you air a girl," he said, one day.

"I wish I was a boy," Jane answered, with flashing eyes. "I'd make things a sight different around here, and I'd make some money, too. Oh well, it won't be long till I can teach school, and then I can make a whole lot." Her hoe flew faster at the thought, and her mind became absorbed in the consideration of what she would do with her earnings.

Thus the days passed, and occasionally a letter came from Will telling of his new home and the work he was doing. Late in the summer the papers and magazine for which Bessie had subscribed began coming to Jane. Their arrival was the great event of the week. To these people who had lived all their lives apart from the world each issue was a wonderful revelation. The parents took comparatively

little interest, because the contents were so far beyond their comprehension, but Jane studied them diligently. She had to look on her maps for the places mentioned, and thus gradually began to get a clearer idea of the world. The illustrations of persons and places revealed a life far different from any she had known. The wealth, the wisdom, the wickedness, the wideness of the world began to dawn upon her. References to public events and the doings of Congress sent her to her civil government for explanations of terms she did not understand, and almost before she knew it the despised book became interesting to her. The study of the newspaper and the care of her flowers were the only recreations she had, and every leisure moment was spent upon one or the other.

Of the two younger girls, Kate was the one more like Jane in disposition. She had much the same energy and ambition, and followed closely in Jane's footsteps. The explanations of different things in the newspapers which the elder girl gave to the younger were of vast benefit to them both. The likeness of their dispositions drew them more and more together, and Jane soon found in Kate a more congenial and helpful companion than Will had been. She infused into the younger girl

a desire for education, and an ambition to be like the people of whom they read in their papers.

Susie cared nothing for her sisters' studies. She was a good-natured, lazy little thing who cared only for present comfort and pleasure, and was entirely content to "Let the morrow take thought for the things of itself." So she shirked what duties she could, and performed what she was obliged to do in as careless and leisurely way as possible, and troubled her head very little in regard to the rest of the world. What did she care how much other people worked, so long as she did not have it to do?

So each one pursued her own way in search of happiness as the summer days went by.

CHAPTER VII.

WINTER EMPLOYMENTS.

To Jane's great joy, Mr. James was reappointed teacher of the school in District No. 10 for the ensuing winter. She had been not a little worried over the chance that some one might receive the school who would not be in sympathy with her efforts, and perhaps incompetent to assist her toward the teacher's certificate for which she was working. She was therefore overjoyed to find that her old teacher would again be able to help her, and welcomed the October days that brought the opening of school.

Mr. James took a deep interest in the girl's progress. She was his one bright, ambitious pupil, and it was a genuine pleasure to him to assist her in her work.

If boys and girls could but realize how diligence, earnestness and obedience never fail to win the heart of a teacher, there surely would be fewer laggards in the ranks of students, and less room for so many to cry out against "favoritism." The teacher does not

live who can stand up and truthfully say, "I have no favorites among my pupils." The pupil does not live who can truthfully say, "I have tried every means in my power, but my teacher will not like me." The pupil who earnestly tries to do just as he is told, and endeavors faithfully to master every task, will win the heart of his teacher without fail. Brilliancy does not count so much as faithfulness. The former is the accidental gift of the few, but the latter is possible for all. Then let the dullard take courage, and the laggard quicken his paces, and ere they know it they will find themselves classed in the ranks of "the teacher's favorites."

Jane had made fair progress in her physiology the previous winter, and, although her summer studies had been irregular and half-hearted, she had obtained a general idea of those two branches which made the study of them easy. Mr. James was a wise and efficient teacher. To drill the girl in the theory and practice of teaching he had her hear the recitations of many of the younger classes, carefully showing her the best methods of conducting them. Did the younger ones need explanations on any lesson Jane was called upon to give them, and in this way her knowledge became clearly and firmly established. In short,

the winter was a thorough normal course for the girl, and she made the most of her advantages. Rain, mud, sleet and snow could not keep her away from school. Patiently she trudged over the two-mile road every day, and Katie was ever at her side.

Susie went when she felt like it, and when the weather was pleasant.

"I'm not goin' to teach school," she said, "so I don't care to bother. There's plenty of time anyway, and I don't like Mr. James. He's cross with me, and scolds because I can't get the 'nines' in my multiplication table. An' he makes me sit with Bettie Rogers an' I don't like her. An' it makes me tired to walk so far. So I guess I won't go to-day."

Sometimes Mrs. Carter would say, "You'd better go to school, Susie, an' not let all the other girls git ahead o' you. You'll be powerful ashamed when you git big, ef you don't git no schoolin'." But she did not insist, for—truth to tell—she found it handy to have Susie at home to carry in wood, to run down to the spring and to do many other little errands to save herself.

The indolent little girl found it much pleasanter to sit on the floor in front of the big fire that glowed in the fireplace, and crack hickory and hazel nuts on the hearth, than it was to

trudge through snow and cold to the hated school and study hard lessons in which she found no pleasure.

Kate took intense interest in Jane's studies, and was proud to see her sister take the teacher's place in school.

"I'll just be a teacher myself," she said, earnestly. "I'm going right to work and will study with all my might, and I'm going to keep on till I'm the very smartest girl in the whole neighborhood. An' when I've learned all there is to know here, I'll teach school and get money to go away to one of the colleges we read about in the magazine, and I'll learn everything there is in the world to learn."

"And what'll you do after you've learned everything?" Jane asked.

"Why, I don't know. Just enjoy myself, I guess," was Katie's vague answer.

"What's the need of learning so much, if you don't intend to use it?" asked practical Jane.

"Oh, I think it would be nice to know everything, and then I could make money enough to do what I wanted, and go round and see things. Isn't that use enough?"

The elder sister hardly knew what answer to make to this question. The whole line of Katie's reasoning was so nearly in accord with

her own desires that she could hardly tell where the fault lay. Still, when it was bluntly put into words as Katie had stated it, it had a false ring which she detected. Suddenly, Mr. Davidson's text flashed into her mind, and unconsciously she repeated it aloud :

"The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary."

"What do you mean?" Katie asked in surprise, as the solemn words fell from her sister's lips.

"I don't know. It's just a Bible verse that Mr. Davidson wrote in my book, and he said it was what the Lord expected us to do with our educations. I don't know how I happened to think of it, and I'm sure I don't know what it means," answered Jane.

Katie pondered over the text as she stepped carefully from one little frozen pool to another and crunched the ice beneath her feet. Presently she said :

"I b'lieve I can tell what it means. I was all tired out to-day and all mixed up on my fractions till Mr. James sent you to show me how to do them ; and then you explained them till they got easy and I forgot I was tired. Isn't that what it means ? Say your verse again, so I can remember how it is."

"The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary," repeated Jane.

"Why that is it—that surely is what it means, Janie. That's a beautiful verse, I think. If you'll say it over for me I'll learn it, so's I'll know what to do when I've learned everything," cried the little girl. "I b'lieve it would be nice to be able to help everybody like you did me, and make them forget their tiredness and feel like they could go ahead alone. Now say your verse, Janie."

The elder girl recited the text and the younger one repeated it after her, over and over, over and over, until it was so firmly impressed upon both memories that it was destined never to be effaced.

Katie's explanation of the Scripture passage was a sermon that went home to Jane's heart. Could it be that her work for her young companions was fulfilling the Lord's command? Then that must be one way of serving the Lord, and she had to admit that she had not found it either a difficult or an unpleasant task. More than that she was conscious of the fact that in helping others she had herself been benefited.

"If this is serving the Lord then I wonder

if everything people do to serve him helps them in the same way. I'll ask Mrs. Davidson about that sometime," Jane thought as they walked silently over the remainder of their homeward road.

From that day forward their "verse" was a constant monitor to the two sisters. It was their one text—the only bit of Scripture that they knew. It was the opening lesson of that Word of truth that was "Able to make them wise unto salvation," and although they realized it not, their religious education had begun.

The three sisters sat before the blazing fire after supper that evening. Jane and Katie had their books, studying their lessons for the morrow. Susie had her favorite seat on the floor and divided her attention between her pet kitten and a lapful of nuts and apples.

"Do quit your studying, girls, and watch what pretty flames my shells make," she cried, impatiently, "I should think you'd get enough of books in school, without bringing them home to spoil all the evening. I wish you'd quit, and talk to me. I'm tired of being all by myself."

"Why don't you go to school then?" asked Katie, as she pushed slate and book aside. The last one of her troublesome complex fractions

was done, and she felt ready to join her sister beside the hearth.

"I don't like school," Susie pouted. "It's too far, and the lessons are too hard. Maybe I'll go when I get bigger. I'm only eleven now, and there's plenty of time to learn."

"But if you wait you'll be so far behind the other girls that you will be ashamed to go, and then you will never know anything," answered Katie.

Susie laughed. "I'll let you and Janie learn it all, and then if I need to know anything I'll just ask you, and that will save me lots of bother. I want to know something right now, so you may tell me. What makes the flames from my shells so much brighter than the rest of the fire?"

"I don't know," replied Katie.

"Well then, what makes apples have seeds in them? Why don't they have stones like peaches?"

"I don't know," again answered Katie.

"I don't see as going to school is making you any wiser than I am after all. You don't know and I don't know. So I'm just as smart as you," returned Susie triumphantly.

"But I will know some day, for I'm going to keep on until I know everything there is to learn, and when I find out then I'll remember

and tell you," retorted Katie with spirit. "When you see what lots of money Janie and I make teaching school, then you'll wish you'd learned your lessons so that you could earn some, too."

"Oh, no, I won't. Will is making a pile of money out West, and some day he will come back or send for us all to go there, and I won't need to work any. I'll be a fine lady and wear nice dresses, and ride a beautiful pony like Cousin Bessie does," replied the obdurate little girl.

"You'd better both shut up your nonsense an' go to bed. I think you both air plum silly," interposed their father, as he shook the ashes from his corncob pipe, laid it on the "mantel-board," and proceeded to wind up the clock. That was always the sign that bedtime had arrived; so the girls slowly put away their things and hastened upstairs.

The two younger ones kept up their chatter. Jane made ready for bed in silence. She was studying over the little sermon that Katie had preached on the way home from school, and wondering just how much there was to be gained by "serving the Lord." Calculating from the benefit she had received from aiding her younger schoolmates, she began to think that perhaps the same rule might be made to

work out still more advantageously to herself. She wished there were some way of finding out beforehand how much gain she might expect if she followed such a course. Perhaps there was some shorter road to wisdom, wealth and happiness than the one she was pursuing. If so, it was time for her to be finding it out. With this conclusion she dropped asleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

WEALTH HAS WINGS.

WILL CARTER had made up his mind that money was the best thing that the world contained, and therefore he turned his whole soul toward securing as much of it as possible. He had never cared for study. School had always been a weariness of the flesh to him, and he had rejoiced when spring work had freed him from its toils. He had never had any opportunity to make any money for himself before he left home. All that he and his father could raise on the worn-out little farm had been needed for the support of the family, so that as long as he stayed at home he had nothing which he could call his own. His ambition for money-making did not assert itself until his uncle visited at his father's home and revealed to the boy's astonished ears what the world had to offer.

With his new life in Kansas, Will Carter threw off the sluggishness of his early years, and awakened to the possibilities that lay before him. All the time that he was work-

ing for his uncle he was studying that gentleman's methods of money-making, and learning all that he possibly could to help him forward in the path he had chosen.

His uncle took pride in the boy's determined efforts to acquire what he himself considered the highest good in life, and rejoiced to see that the young fellow was of so saving a disposition.

"No danger of Will wasting his money," he would say approvingly. "He's lived without any for so long that he is not inclined to throw it away for all sorts of foolishness, as most young fellows do. No danger of his gambling or drinking or smoking it away. He is the kind of boy that will make a successful man."

"But father," Bessie would sometimes say, "why don't Will ever send any money back to his homefolks? If they are so poor as you say, they surely need his help." Whereat her father would laugh heartily and say, "What do you suppose they would do with money if they had it? They don't know enough to spend it. They have enough to eat—such as it is. They are not used to anything better than they have, and could not get it even if they wished. They have no need for fine clothes, for there is nowhere to go and no one

to see. Calico and jeans are what the whole community wear. What could they do with money? Will can do more good with his earnings if he keeps them here and invests them right. He can 'turn his capital over,' in a year, and make a good thing for himself."

"But what is money for?" questioned Bessie. "I thought it was intended to use. From what Will tells me, his home has scarcely anything in it, and the house is old and dilapidated. I should think he would want to fix things up comfortably."

"The house is good enough, and his people are satisfied with it as it is. It would only be a lot of dead money if he spent it there. No, my dear, don't worry your little head about such things. Will is making the best possible use of his money, and is getting ahead remarkably well for a boy."

Bessie was silenced, but not convinced. She studied Will's actions and his disposition, and saw that the spirit of selfishness and greed was getting fast hold on him. It pained her to see that while he did not spend his money foolishly, he would not spend it rightfully.

It was a hot, breathless day in September. There had been no rain for weeks, and the prairies were burned brown by the fierce sun

of summer. The bed of the Ninnescah river was nearly dry, and the tumbleweeds and rushes along its banks were withered and dead. The sky had a burned-out, coppery look, the wind was dead, and there was a faint smell of smoke in the air.

The men at Mr. William Carter's ranch had been plowing for wheat; but the ground was so dry and hard that they could hardly force the plowshares through it.

"I reckon we'll have to give it up, Mr. Carter," one of the old men said when they came to the house for dinner. "The ground is dry as powder and hard as iron. We can't keep the plows in the ground, and we'll have to stop till it rains."

"Very well," the farmer answered. "I thought you'd have to quit pretty soon. We'll go at something else."

"Some fellow across the river has let fire get away from him. It's been creeping north all the morning. It can't go much further, for it is almost to the river," remarked another of the men.

"It's a good thing the river's there. If it wasn't we'd have to be looking out for all those haystacks down in the bottom," answered his employer. Then they all sat down to dinner, and turned their thoughts and conversation to

other subjects. A sudden gust of wind whirled in at the south windows and swept through the dining-room. It was a hot, rough, dusty breeze, but it was "air in motion," and anything was better than the stagnation of the moment previous, so they hailed it as a relief. Somebody had just made a joking remark about it, at which the rest were laughing, when Bessie rushed impetuously into the room.

"Father, father! The fire has jumped the river and is coming this way!" she cried.

There was a chorus of exclamations. Every man sprang from the table, seized his hat and hurried outdoors.

The strong wind from the southwest had fanned the creeping fire into a leaping, devouring monster. Huge burning tumbleweeds had been blown across the narrow river, and falling amid the dry grass and rushes of the eastern shore had kindled a fire which seemed to be flying across the prairies. Great clouds of smoke rolled northeastward, and almost obscured the sun which showed dimly through them like a ball of fire.

"Will, hitch the bay team to the wagon. Some of the rest of you, throw in those two breaking plows and get those sacks out of the east granary. We'll need your team, Tom. We must save those stacks if possible. We

must at least stop the fire on the line below, or everything here will go," cried Mr. Carter.

His orders were hardly given till they were carried out, and in another moment the men were in the wagon and the horses dashed away. Will was the only one of the party that had never seen or battled with a prairie fire, and was much excited accordingly.

The party hastened to reach the corner southwest of the section on which the haystacks stood. The plows were hastily dragged from the wagon, a team hitched to each, and starting from the corner, a furrow was plowed north and one east. This was a hard task for both horses and men. The ground was so dry and hard that it was almost impossible to keep the plows in it so as to make the furrow from which to start the back-fire; but it was accomplished after a fashion. The fire was started on the outside of these furrows and trailed along by bunches of grass until it formed a continuous line. The tiny tongues of flame which crept across the imperfect barriers were beaten out with the sacks.

Slowly the little black line of defence widened. If it did not prove sufficient to turn the fire, not only the haystacks would be burned, but the flames would sweep across the dry prairie and endanger the house and barns

upon the hill. The men worked rapidly and desperately. The great fire drew nearer and nearer. They could hear the roar and crackle of the flames as they seized upon the dry and oily sunflowers and clumps of tall sage grass. The wind came to them stifling with smoke and hot as a blast from an oven. Numbers of jack-rabbits, driven from their accustomed haunts, came leaping across the prairie; bevvies of prairie chickens and quail flew whirring by; several huge rattlesnakes and blue racers darted through the narrow back-fire, and sought refuge under the haystacks.

Suddenly the back-fire sent up leaping tongues of flames, and began to fly forward to meet its huge adversary, much as bits of steel are drawn to a magnet. On came the fire, a roaring, surging, seething billow of flame that broke over the little blackened beach of burned prairie and reached out for the dry grass beyond. Then came the hardest work for the men, watching for every spark that crossed the barrier, and beating out the flames that sprang up in many places on the side toward the stacks. Fortunately for them, there were no tumbleweeds in the prairie near them, or their task would have been hopeless. The great balls of fire would have carried the flames by them in spite of every

effort. At last the baffled fire drew back, swept around and on, and the haystacks were safe. The broad stretches of plowing soon checked the fire to the north and west; but it swept for a long distance to the east before it met bare fields that stopped its progress. Numbers of men were working all along the line, striving to save the homes and other property of their neighbors. In spite of all efforts, much was destroyed before the devouring element was stayed; and the sun had sunk in the west before the men dared return to their homes.

It was an exhausted set of fellows that tramped into Mr. Carter's home that evening. Their eyes were red and swollen with smoke, their faces grimy with cinders, and two who had been in the hottest of the fight, had their mustaches and eyebrows scorched. How hungry they were! They had eaten an early breakfast, and had only barely tasted their dinner when the alarm of fire called them away. So they were ready to do ample justice to the smoking, hot supper they found awaiting them. Of course the fire was the one subject of conversation.

"How in the world did all those men get there in time?" Mr. Carter asked. "We could never have held the fire back if they

had not come to our assistance just when they did."

"I knew there was a threshing crew at Mr. Brown's and another on the Mason ranch, so I saddled Gipsy and went to both places. It didn't take long for them to quit work and start when I told them where the fire was. They had seen the smoke, but they thought it was still across the river and that this side was safe," Bessie answered.

"I should think they would come quick," remarked Tom. "Three of them live down there in the bottom, and everything they had was at stake. It's a good thing you thought to go after them, Bessie."

As for Will, he was so weary and excited he could hardly eat. The afternoon's experience had been one that he could never forget. Never in all his life had he witnessed such a wild and terrifying thing as the swift advance of that furious fire. He had learned another thing—the suddenness with which the savings and work of years might be swept away. He looked at his uncle's great barns and well-filled granaries, his beautiful home with all its surrounding improvements, and realized how nearly the carelessness of some one else had come to snatching away what had taken years to accumulate.

After several days' inquiry it was learned that the fire had been started by a lighted cigar stub, which a young fellow had carelessly thrown down in the grass beside the road. From that spark had started the flames, which swept away several homes and rendered two families penniless.

A liberal contribution of money, clothing and household stores was raised by the neighborhood for those who had lost everything in the fire.

To Bessie's great indignation Will gave as little as he possibly could, although the other men gave generously and even lavishly

"I cannot afford it," was his feeble excuse.

"It will come back on him some day," one of the men remarked. "Such stinginess always meets its just reward."

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIRST JOURNEY.

LATE in the summer the long-looked for teachers' examination was to take place. It was to be held in the county-seat, ten miles from the home of the Carters, and the journey seemed a wonderful one to Jane. Mr. James had arranged to take her to Vernon, and help her as far as possible in her great undertaking. Katie was to go, too, as company for her sister, and the two girls were in a perfect flutter of excitement. They had never been farther from home than the river Landing—five miles away—therefore the journey before them was the event of their lives. It was as great an undertaking for them as crossing the continent or the ocean would be for others. All summer long they talked about the expected trip, and worked to raise the necessary money. New calico dresses must be bought and money provided to pay for stationery and the examiner's fee. So the girls gathered blackberries and ginseng roots, which they sold to the peddler who came from the Landing once a week.

Their mother helped them a little with part of her egg and butter money, and the proceeds from the sale of a flock of Jane's spring chickens raised the necessary amount.

One Thursday evening, in August, Mr. James arrived in a two-seated, two-horse spring wagon, and early the next morning the trio started on their journey.

The two girls felt quite fine in their new, dark calico dresses. Their heavy shoes had been carefully blackened, and their plain straw hats had been decorated by a new ribbon apiece—the gifts of the kindly old peddler.

They had never been quite so well-dressed before, and, as Mr. and Mrs. Carter and Susie looked after them, the father said, "Them gals is fine as a fiddle. I'll be bound there won't be any stylisher ones at the examination. I hope their new clo'es won't turn their heads and be the spilin' of them."

The first three miles of the way were familiar to the young travelers; then they turned off into a strange road that led away through the labyrinth of the forest. Now and then they passed near a house—always built of logs and covered with clapboard shingles. There was a small clearing about each one in which was a garden and a little orchard. A half-dozen dogs barked inhospitably inside the rail

fences, and the "women-folks" and children rushed to the doors and windows to gaze at the infrequent diversion of "somebody goin' by."

After a time the "knobs" were reached. The girls were glad to get out of the wagon and rest themselves by walking up the mile of steep grade. A sudden turn in the road at the top of the hill revealed a scene of beauty that caused them both to cry out in wonder and admiration. At their feet lay a long, narrow valley, bounded by steep hills. Through its centre ran the river, sparkling, smiling, winding its way in many a broad curve; and far in the distance could be seen the spires and roofs of Vernon—the county-town—and the destination of the young travelers.

Kate seized her sister's arm in a perfect ecstasy of delight.

"How big it is! How far we can see! O Jane, isn't it wonderful? Look at the fields way down yonder. They look like a patchwork quilt. And the river is a million times as big as our spring. O Janie, I didn't know things could look like this!"

Mr. James smiled at the child's rapture, and waited till the two girls had gazed until they were satisfied. Then they resumed their seats in the wagon, and began the descent of the

long hill. The road was narrow and rocky, and much skill had to be exercised by the driver to avoid the stumps that thickly dotted the track. At the base of the young mountain a smoother road was reached, and the horses trotted rapidly along the track which part of the way led within a few feet of the river bank. A great steamer suddenly came gliding around a bend, and the girls had their first view of another object of wonder and awe. It seemed to fairly fly past them, the heavy smoke rolling from its tall chimneys, the steam hissing through its pipes and the great wheels churning the foaming water. The wonder of the young travelers was too great for words. They sat in silence, fairly trembling with excitement. Already they had seen marvels that surpassed their wildest expectations, and that were almost too great for comprehension.

By the time they had passed through the busy streets of the town, and reached Mr. James' home, they were so dazed that they could hardly speak even to one another. They had been set down in a new world. The people about them belonged to a different race. Their dress, their appearance, their very movements were unlike those of the dwellers in the backwoods. Vehicles dashed about the street in

a perfectly reckless fashion, and people rushed along as if their lives depended on getting over the ground as swiftly as possible. This was the impression made on the two girls by what they saw about them in the same town which their uncle a year previous had said was "the slowest, old-fogiest, most rat-eaten town he had seen for ages." Thus differently do our familiar surroundings make unfamiliar places appear to our judgment.

The sisters of Mr. James were watching eagerly for the advent of their country visitors. There were three of the James girls, Cora being a young lady of twenty, Clara, about the same age as Jane, and Eva, a little miss of twelve years. Their brother had described Jane and Kate Carter to them so many times that they were quite sure they were thoroughly prepared for any degree of rusticity in the girls who were to spend two days in their home; but as soon as they beheld their visitors, they realized that their ideas had widely missed the mark. There was an instant of amused hesitation when they saw the strangers alight at their gate; then true Christian courtesy caused them to put away all such unkindness and hasten to greet their guests with cordiality.

The room into which Jane and Kate were

ushered was a marvel of elegance in their eyes. To the citizens of Vernon it appeared only as the cheery, well-furnished sitting-room of an educated family of moderate means; but these girls had come from a home where the "best room" floor was covered with rag-carpet, the windows shaded with blue paper shades, the walls and ceilings whitewashed and the furniture of the old-fashioned "splint-bottom" variety. To them ingrain carpets, lace curtains, dainty wall paper and modern furniture were the furnishing of a veritable Aladdin's palace.

They were ill-at-ease, nervous and homesick in an instant. Their dark calicoes and heavy shoes had appeared very fine until they saw them beside the light lawns and slippers of their hostesses. This was a phase of the world upon which they had not reckoned. They knew so little that it had never entered their heads that they might not be like the people whom they were going to meet. This discovery is always fatal to one's ease and happiness, and it was painfully so in this case. The girls had not been in this strange house five minutes until they were longing ardently for their backwoods solitudes. Katie was almost crying from fright and weariness, and Jane only kept her self-possession because of

the necessity of doing so on her sister's account.

The James girls were troubled by the unpleasant situation, but knew not how to relieve it until their mother suggested that Clara should show the guests up to the room they were to occupy, and give them a chance to rest themselves and bathe off the dust of travel.

As soon as they were left alone Katie threw herself into Jane's arms with a great sob of homesickness.

"O Janie! O Janie! I want to go home!" she wailed.

"Hush, dear," the elder sister said, while tears streamed from her own eyes. "We can't go home to-night, so we must stand it the best we can. It won't be very long till Monday."

"Oh, yes, it will," sobbed Katie. "And it's so terribly far away. How can we ever get back? O Janie, I *can't* stay here."

Jane soothed her as much as she could, and the two wept together until the first strain of their weariness and excitement was over. Then Jane said:

"Now, Katie, we must stop this nonsense and try to act right. Mr. James has been to a great deal of trouble to bring us here so as

to help me get ready to teach, and we must not make him feel ashamed of us. His folks want to be kind to us, and we must be kind to them by showing that we appreciate what they do. Maybe we won't feel so lonesome if we'll try not to think about home at all, but just try to see how many new things we can find. I'll keep count and you keep count; and when we go to bed to-night we'll tell one another about it, and each say what was the strangest thing we saw. Will you? We want to see and learn all we can, for there is no telling whether we ever will have such a chance again. Let's try to forget all about ourselves, and study everybody and everything we see. It will be a real play, and interesting too. Don't you think so? Now, let's see how many new things we can count in this room while we wash our faces and comb our hair."

Katie's mind was diverted by this very sensible advice, and she eagerly began counting the toilet accessories and dainty furnishings of Mrs. James' guest room.

By the time Clara and Eva tapped at the door Jane and Katie were much more at ease, and more ready to respond to the kind advances of their entertainers.

As the evening went by they found it hard to keep back thoughts of home and of them-

selves, for they were confronted by such strange customs and so many unheard-of things that they constantly felt their awkwardness. The appointments of this home, the table service, even the food, were so very different from that of their home that they were kept in a perfect quiver of embarrassment. Their kind entertainers did everything in their power to make them feel more at home and put them at their ease. After tea the brother proposed a stroll through the town, and the four girls readily acceded. Eva took Katie in charge, and Clara and Mr. James walked with Jane, pointing out and explaining the various objects which they thought might interest her. The gas-lit streets, the bright shop windows, the numbers of people whom they met all excited the girls' wonder.

"I don't see how you ever find your way home," Katie said to Eva, who laughed merrily and replied:

"It is easy enough because I am used to living in town. I expect I would be frightened most out of my senses if I had to walk through your woods, and I'd be sure to get lost. Aren't you afraid of panthers and such things?"

"Why no!" exclaimed Katie in surprise.

"There ain't any. There's nothing but rabbits and screechows and snakes—there's a good many of them."

"Snakes! Ugh! They'd be worse than panthers. Don't they nearly scare you to death? What do you do when you see one?"

"Kill it, of course—if it don't get away too quick. No, I'm not afraid of 'em. There ain't any poison ones but the vipers, and they won't fight unless you make 'em. I've killed lots of snakes."

"You must be very brave," said Eva, with a note of wonder and respect in her voice. "Most girls would scream and run away."

"Country girls don't, because they're used to 'em," Katie replied. She felt considerably better. At last she had found a point where she could claim superiority over this town girl. The bravery all vanished, however, when the party visited the railway station, and the cannon-ball express came thundering by. Her terror and Jane's was extreme, and they trembled long after the iron monster had rushed out of sight. This crowning wonder closed their day.

They were glad when bedtime brought an end to all the excitement and fatigue, and even home was forgotten in heavy slumbers.

CHAPTER X.

“THE WISDOM FROM ABOVE.”

THE next day at the appointed hour Mr. James escorted Jane and Katie to the place where the all-important examination was to be held. He saw that his pupil had all necessary articles of stationery, and gave her much good advice and many words of encouragement, that helped to quiet her fluttering nerves. He introduced her to the examiners, and privately begged them to assist her in every possible way, as she was unacquainted with the rules and customs of county examinations. Having thus done all that lay in his power, he assured the girls that his sisters would call for them at noon and show them the way home—thus relieving them of their last anxiety.

Then Jane set industriously to work. She followed her teacher's advice to “Take the questions as they come. Do not puzzle and worry yourself over what lies ahead. If you do, you will get nothing clear. If you find you cannot answer a question, then it will be time enough to go on to the next. One question

at a time—that is the way all life questions come to us, and we only lose time if we worry over the ones beyond, while trying to answer the one in hand."

Eva and Clara had tried to persuade Katie to stay with them while Jane attended the examination; but the child shook her head nervously at the very idea of being separated from her sister, so the girls did not insist.

Now, she sat silently by Jane's side, watching her sister's pencil fly over the paper, or looking sympathetically at her if she saw Jane was puzzled over a question.

Or, she gazed wonderingly about the school-room, with its patent desks, improved blackboards, and curtained windows. It was very unlike the one in District No. 10, and she thought it would be delightful to study in such a big, light, airy room as this. She was sure that she would have good lessons every day, and never want to miss an hour of such delightful opportunities for study. Some day, when she was grown up and had learned everything there was in the world to learn, she would teach school in just such a room as this. And she would have ever so much money, and wear beautiful dresses and slippers like Miss Cora James, and play the piano and paint pictures like she did. And she would be

used to town, and go everywhere all by herself; and when she went along the street, people would say, "There goes Katie Carter. She knows everything there is in the world to learn."

With such dreams as these the little girl passed her time until Eva's bright face appeared at the schoolroom door just as the clock pointed to twelve. She found quite a good deal to talk about to Eva as they walked homeward; while Jane walked almost silently beside them.

Mr. James questioned Jane in regard to her examinations, and encouraged her wonderfully by telling her that he believed she had answered enough questions to pass her creditably in the branches gone over. Katie felt so much more at home than she had done in the morning that Eva did not have much trouble in persuading her to stay with her that afternoon; and Jane had grown independent enough to find her way back to the schoolhouse alone.

When the day was over and her last paper handed in, she felt as if she were a different girl from the one who had entered the room that morning. The dreaded examination was over, and had not proved so very hard after all. She stepped briskly along the sidewalk, and felt as if she had certainly grown several

inches. She had done a good thing, and done it well. Then she remembered Mrs. Davidson's quotation; "The reward of a thing well done, is to have done it."

"I believe that is true," she murmured. "I am sure of that much of a reward, even if I don't get a school."

The next day was the Sabbath. The James girls held a little consultation in their room that morning in regard to their visitors.

"O girls," cried Clara. "Have we got to take them to church in those ugly dresses and hats, and those big, clumsy shoes? Can't we lend them some of our things so they will look more like other people?"

"No," Cora answered, thoughtfully. "It would not do. They would only feel more awkward and embarrassed. It would be a confession on your part that you were ashamed of them, and they would rightly resent it. Can you not rise superior to clothes, Clara?"

"I might, but other people won't," answered Clara.

"Then rise superior to other people, as well," returned Cora.

"Mamma says this visit is a Christian Endeavor which the Lord has sent to us. She said the right thing for us to do, was to try to imagine ourselves the Carter girls, and then

treat them as we would want to be treated. I believe I'd rather wear my own clothes—even if they were ugly—than to have somebody dress me in her old ones. And I believe I wouldn't want the folks I was visiting to dress up in their new mull dresses to walk along side of me, either," cried Eva. Cora and Clara flushed, and looked at one another doubtfully.

They realized all at once how much their hearts were set on the dainty dresses that had only been finished that week, and that looked so cool and inviting as they lay spread carefully upon the bed. They stood in silence for a moment or two, then Cora walked quietly to the bed, took up her dress and put it away.

"O Cora!" Clara cried, with tears in her eyes. "I do want to wear mine; and the old lawn doesn't look a bit nice any more."

"Is it too much to give up for Jesus' sake?" asked Cora.

"I'll wear the old one," answered Clara, after a moment's hesitation. It was a real trial to this young girl to forego the pleasure of a dainty and pretty costume. She was at the age when girls begin to be fond of such things, and to desire to dress like their companions. So it took a real Christian spirit to enable her to overcome the temptation to please herself rather than others.

These three girls were Christian Endeavorers—faithful and earnest and true. They were striving to put aside all feeling of amusement at the uncouth dress and manners of their visitors, and look upon them as Christians should ever do toward those whom they can help. Their mother understood, and looked her approval when they came downstairs arrayed in their old dresses; and their hearts were light—not merely because of her commendation, but because they felt that they had denied themselves for Jesus' sake.

That Sabbath was a revelation to Jane and Kate. The Sunday-school and church services were so impressive, and the house of God where people walked with quiet tread and reverent silence seemed so holy. They were accustomed to the bare floors of their home church, where heavy shoes made resounding clatter; and to noisy greetings and hearty laughter as the people "visited" after the services were over. Here, there were soft carpets upon the floors, the light stole in through richly stained windows, the air was redolent with perfume, and beautiful flowers added to the attractiveness of the place.

"O Jane," Katie whispered, "if I lived here, I'd come to church every day."

But the strangest service of all was the

Christian Endeavor meeting to which their new friends took them that evening. They had been in very few prayer-meetings in their lives, and these had been conducted by the minister and old grey-headed men. They looked about them in surprise, for here were only young people like themselves. A boy about sixteen years of age was leader of the meeting, and he performed his part in such a way as proved it was no uncommon thing for him to do. But that was only a beginning of wonders. As one member after another arose to speak, to pray, to recite some Scripture passage, the visitors were amazed to see that the girls, as well as young men and boys, took their share in the services.

It so happened that the subject for the evening was "True Wisdom," and the Scripture passages recited were all in regard to it.

"If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."

"The wisdom that cometh down from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

These were but a sample of the texts that were rapidly repeated that evening; and the "bow drawn at a venture" shot its arrows

deep into one heart in that little congregation.

Wisdom was Jane Carter's one desire. She suddenly realized that there was a source of wisdom which she had not known, and a kind which was held to be "far above rubies," and the desire to obtain this superior wisdom was born in her heart that Sabbath evening.

The next day the two visitors were to return to their home. Clara and Eva begged their brother to allow them to accompany him on the trip, and, when he found that Jane and Kate were quite as eager to have them go, he gave his consent. So it was a very merry party that drove away from Vernon the next morning.

Clara and Eva were surprised at the change that came over the Carter girls as soon as town was fairly left behind and they found themselves upon the country roads. As the dense forest closed behind them the town girls felt as if civilization was cut off. Would they ever find their way out of these silent solitudes? But Jane and Kate were once more in their own element. They took delight in teaching Clara and Eva to distinguish the different kinds of trees, vines and bushes which they passed. They recognized the various birds by their notes, although the songsters

were hidden amid the trees; and the town girls learned that there was a knowledge they might acquire from their country sisters.

The whole ten miles were passed without meeting any one on the road, and it was late in the afternoon when the party arrived at the Carter home. There Clara and Eva found things as strange as their own home had appeared to Jane and Kate.

While their brother talked with Mr. and Mrs. Carter, the girls accompanied their hostesses to see the various things of interest to them. Jane's stumps were duly admired, and Jane shyly told the story of their transformation and the lesson which Mrs. Davidson had applied to them.

"That is beautiful," exclaimed Clara. "It was worth coming all the way down here just to see them and learn that lesson. There are some stumps in my life that maybe I can change to things of beauty." Jane looked at her incredulously.

"I thought you had everything," she said, simply.

"Oh no," replied Clara. "Don't you know the more one has the more she wants? Sometimes I get real impatient because I cannot have what I think I would like, and sometimes I want to do things that are denied me. Now

I know what to do with my ugly 'stumps.' I'm glad I came down here, and I'm glad you told me all about them."

The girls rambled all about the place. They visited the wonderful big spring, they went with Katie and Susie to hunt eggs in the barn, they watched Jane milk the cows. When bedtime came they were ready to sink down into the great feather-bed, and dream over the events of their "wonderful day."

When they reached home the next evening they had quite as much to tell their parents and Cora, as Jane and Kate had to recount of the wonders of the town. They also had the joy of knowing that they had acted with true Christian courtesy toward their backwoods visitors, and had succeeded in making their trip both pleasant and profitable. They had overcome their own pride and unkind sense of amusement, and come off conquerors over their own spirits.

As for Jane and Kate, life was all changed for them. They had caught a glimpse of the outside world. They had learned that it held possibilities of which they had never dreamed. They could never again settle down into the old, unreasoning rut of entire satisfaction with things as they were. They had discovered many things about their home and about

themselves which were in their power to improve, and many others toward which they might work. This visit was one of the milestones of their history.

CHAPTER XI.

IN "DEESTRICT NO. 12."

IN due time the important teacher's certificate was received, and Jane's heart beat high with joy and pride. After it had been admired and exclaimed over by the family, she put it carefully away; but many times in a day she slipped away to her room to examine it secretly and rejoice in its possession. She would carefully smooth out its folds and read over the grades with pardonable pride. It was the measure of her success, the proof of her ability, the reward of her patient toil. Thus far she had conquered the world.

Now, like Alexander the Great, she looked for new fields of effort. Without delay she set about securing a school to teach. Several places were tried in vain. Either she was too late in applying, or her youth and inexperience were against her. She almost began to despair and to lose faith in the magical influence of her certificate. Then she found a school in a neighboring district which had either been overlooked, or had proved undesirable to her

fellow-applicants. Two of the directors took but little interest in the subject of hiring a teacher, and referred her to the third, saying,

“It’ll be jest as Watkins says. He’s got the most young uns, an’ takes the most int’rust in the school.”

So to “Watkins” she went. He was nailing up his hogpen, and hardly seemed to hear her modest request in regard to the school until he removed the last nail from his mouth and drove it tightly into the place. Then he straightened up and looked at her from under his eyebrows.

“Hain’t you pretty middlin’ young to be a-teachin’ school?” he asked, severely.

“I’ll be seventeen this month,” faltered Jane.

“S’pose you know enough to teach the young uns of this deestric?” was the next question.

“I think I do. Here is my certificate,” answered Jane, holding out the document. He took it and looked it over critically, although, if he had confessed the truth, he could not read the half of it, and knew nothing whatever of “per cents.” and “general averages.”

“Bin plum through the ’rithmetic?” he asked, presently.

“Yes, several times.”

“An’ the spellin’ book an’ jogerphy?”

"Yes," she answered.

"S'pose you could whip the big boys ef they got too pestiferous?"

"If they weren't *too* big," answered Jane, doubtfully.

"Wa-al, you've got red hair, so I 'low you've got spunk enough. It don't do to be too easy on youngsters. That wasn't the way I was brung up, an' it hain't the way I mean to raise my young uns. A good sound thrashin' now an' then is good fer a boy. Makes him grow, an' grow straight at that. How much wages did you cal'late to git?"

"Whatever your district is in the habit of paying."

"Wa-al, we give the last teacher forty dollars, but he didn't earn the half of it. Went to sleep mighty nigh ever' day after dinner, an' let the young uns do 'bout as they pleased. Bein' as you're so young an' hain't never taught any, I don't know as we could give you so much. I 'low we might give you about thirty-five dollars a month. That 'ud be big wages fer a strip of a gal like you. Ef you'll be satisfied with that, you kin have the school. It's to begin the first of October, an' run six months. We don't 'low to give no week's holiday at Christmas, like the teacher did last year. It runs the school over into plowin'

time, an' we want the young uns to work then. Yes, you kin have the place."

Jane thanked him, and turned away toward her home. She hardly knew whether she was more happy or afraid. She realized all at once that there was an unpleasant side to the work ahead of her, and that this director of hers was more apt to be "pestiferous" than the big boys of whom he had warned her. She almost wished that he had refused to give her the place.

Then came the soothing thought of the thirty-five dollars a month—two hundred and ten dollars for the year! she told herself joyously. It was more money than she had ever seen, far more than she had ever thought to possess, and she at once began to plan what she could purchase with it. Visions of lawn dresses and slippers, cushioned rockers and lace curtains floated through her brain. There must be a new porch built, and a fence around the yard—a paling fence, to keep the chickens away from her flower-beds. And maybe some blissful day there would be an organ in the "best room," and she and Katie could learn to play it. Such thoughts as these banished the dread of "big boys" and "Watkins," and winged her feet as she walked swiftly homeward with her good tidings.

The days fairly flew by, and October dawned fair and promising. With much shrinking of heart, Jane walked into the little schoolhouse of "District No. 12," and encountered the curious stares of the dozen children gathered there.

She was a little nonplussed over how to open the school. Mr. James had always read a passage of Scripture and offered a short prayer; but Jane had never prayed, even in secret, and could not remember a form of prayer to use on such an occasion as this. So she merely rapped for order, requested the pupils to take their seats, and gave them a task to write on their slates while she took their names and arranged her classes. This was a new method of procedure with the children of District No. 12, and they went silently to work.

Suddenly Director Watkins appeared in the doorway. He noted approvingly that every one was busy, and that the silence was broken only by the tap of pencils.

"Got 'em to work a-ready, have you?" said his loud voice. "That's right. Don't let 'em do no playin'. 'Tain't what they're here for. Thrash 'em good ef they don't mind you. An' give 'em plenty of spellin' book. That's the thing to bring 'em up on. I jest hauled over

a load of wood. It's gittin' middlin' cold these mornin's, an' I 'lowed there'd be need of a fire. Now, young uns, mind yore teacher an' git yore lessons. Ef you need help any time, Miss Carter, jest let me know."

Then he vanished, and was soon heard throwing his load of wood into the little shed at the back of the schoolhouse; but someway Jane's fear of him had gone. She began to feel that perhaps he would not be "pestiferous" *if she did her duty*, and that she determined to do.

She was glad when the long day was over and the pupils dismissed. She swept the schoolroom, arranged her desk, brought in wood and kindlings to start her morning fire, then closed the schoolroom door behind her, and turned toward home.

The schoolhouse of District No. 12 stood on the brow of a hill that sloped steeply to a little creek known as Dry Branch. This creek was so called because its bed was usually dry; but sudden freshets often swelled it to imposing proportions—as a high foot-log across it proved. Heavy timber covered the hills on either side of the stream, and no sign of human habitation could be seen from the schoolhouse, except a rail fence that crossed the hill a rod or two above the building. It was as

utterly lonely as any place could be, and Jane turned gladly from it to walk through the solitary woods two miles to her home.

The winter wore slowly by, and the school made satisfactory progress. There were days when not only the big boys, but the whole school as well, were inclined to be unruly; days when the inexperienced young teacher hardly knew which way to turn; days when Mr. Watkins was crabbed and fault-finding and the whole educational system seemed out of gear. But these days were comparatively few. There were times when Jane's hot temper flashed out, and she felt like "thrashing" the whole school. She found that her brother had spoken truly when he said, "You get mad too easy to teach school." She learned that she could not allow her temper to run riot here as she had been accustomed to do at home. She had to control her tongue and restrain her passion. Sometimes when she did forget, and scolded vigorously over some trivial fault, her pupils looked at her in such open-eyed amazement that she was ashamed of herself. Such humiliation was good for her, although it was far from pleasant, and she did not recognize its value at the time. Still, as the weeks passed on, she realized that she was gaining control over herself, and the knowl-

edge made her stronger to withstand the fiery assaults of her evil disposition. This was part of the "wages" not included in the thirty-five dollars a month which Mr. Watkins had promised her; and although it was not reckoned in dollars and cents, it brought its reward in an approving conscience at the time, and formed a stepping-stone toward the greater things promised "to him that overcometh."

Meanwhile, Katie was following earnestly in her elder sister's footsteps. Jane was her ideal of what a girl should be. She acknowledged that in dress and elegance of manners the James girls were her sister's superiors: "But then they ain't half so smart," she told herself. "They can play the piano and paint pictures, but they don't know enough to teach school and Jane does. An' some day I'm going to be smarter too, and I'll play the piano and paint pictures beside. An' I'll make money like Jane does, an' have lots of things. I won't give pap any to buy tobacco with, like Jane does. I do think she hadn't ought to—only pap *is* cross when he's out of tobacco. Still I'd hate to see him burn my money in his pipe, and spit it away, after I'd worked as hard as she does to get it."

As for Susie, she lived the indolent, selfish life in which she found her highest pleasure.

She went to school when she was tired of staying at home; she stayed at home when she was tired of going to school. Being the "baby" of the family, she was allowed to do just as she pleased, and she always "pleased" to please herself. There was only one time of the year when she showed any special industry, and that was in the nutting season. She knew where the sweetest hickory nuts, the biggest hazels, the fattest chestnuts grew and she and the squirrels vied with one another in laying up their winter stores. Unlike her two sisters, she was always good-natured. "It was too much trouble to fuss," and, as their interests did not lie in the same direction, their opinions rarely ever clashed. She was her father's especial pet, and as he watched her easy-going ways he would smile and say, "She's a regular Carter, she is."

CHAPTER XII.

ASPIRATIONS.

JANE was walking leisurely home from school one March day. It had been a very pleasant day. There was a breath of spring in the air, and the birds were calling joyously in the trees. Some early ferns were peeping from beneath the sunny side of a log, the buds on the maples were swelling, and grass was springing up in the fence corners. Jane felt very happy. Her school was drawing toward its close, and she felt that it had been a successful winter both for her pupils and herself. Even Mr. Watkins had seemed satisfied, and she began to hope that perhaps he would be willing to grant her the place for another winter, and perhaps increase her wages. The five dollars extra per month would go a long way toward swelling her savings, and would shorten the time which must elapse before she reached the goal toward which she was striving. For she had found a new aim for her ambition, and was straining every nerve toward its fulfilment.

When her first three months' salary was drawn she had spent the most of it for comforts for the family, and in making some of the improvements for which she had planned. The new porch was built, and added much to the respectability of the old house. The rotten rail fence was torn away, and a trim, tight paling fence put in its place. These things cost but little, as the lumber was sawed at a mill near by from timber cut from their own wood-lot. Jane had not trusted these improvements to her father's easy-going disposition, knowing well that the work would linger exasperatingly if she left it for him to do. She hired the work done, and had the satisfaction of seeing it done well.

There were some conveniences added to the furnishing of the house, and the family were better clothed than they had ever been before. All these things drained heavily upon her purse, but she did not feel sorry. There was little selfishness in her disposition, and she rejoiced in being able to thus help those whom she loved. Was not this the end and aim of her work? Was it not for this that she had studied?

But with the New Year's number of the magazine had come a new and shining aspiration. Among the good things her magazine

contained was an illustrated article on higher education for women. There were short descriptions of various colleges, and among them were several conducted on the Mt. Holyoke system—where the young ladies aided in the domestic work, and the tuition was accordingly low. The article went on to speak of the advantage this system gave to girls of limited means, and mentioned the fact that in some of these schools a few girls each year were allowed to work out their entire board and tuition—thus reducing the cost of their educations to a very small sum.

Jane's ambitious spirit took fire at once. Here was her opportunity. She and Katie studied earnestly over the article. Then they carried the book to Mrs. Davidson.

"Was this true? Was there such a place, and could girls manage to go there for the very small sum mentioned in the article?"

"Yes," she answered. "It is quite true, for I graduated at one of these very schools. It is a delightful place. It is quite the equal of the higher-priced colleges, and its course of study is just as complete; but the domestic arrangements reduce the expense so much that board and tuition are placed correspondingly low. The time for work is arranged so as not to conflict with study, and the hour

thus spent is really a rest to the mind. By working four hours a day, instead of one, several girls managed to pay their entire way while I was there. They were at no expense except for clothing and books, and they were not looked down upon by the other girls. Indeed, we really admired them for the spirit they showed in thus working for an education."

"O, Mrs. Davidson, could I go? Do you suppose I could go? I never dreamed that there was such a chance as this. And oh, I do want to know all the things I could learn there. Do you suppose that if I save my money the rest of this year, and next year, I would have enough to go? Of course I can't save all of it. I have to help the folks. But if I put a little by every month, do you suppose I could save enough for books and clothes and to get there?"

Mrs. Davidson did a little figuring, then she answered,

"Yes, you could do it if you saved one hundred dollars. I know, because that is what it cost me above my tuition. You would have no money to spare for extras, but you could get along respectably on that amount, and you surely can save that much." Then followed a long conversation between Mrs.

Davidson and Jane, while Katie was a silent and attentive listener. The lady gave a full description of the school of which she was a graduate. She described the arrangements for domestic work, and the methods by which the work was carried out. Full accounts were given of the rules of the school, the courses of study, the style of dress which the students wore, the recreations allowed and the general character of the school.

The girls went home with their heads in a whirl. A new and delightful and altogether possible world had opened up before them. The narrow confines of their native hills seemed to have lifted and been set down at new and wider distances. Life suddenly meant more for them than they had ever dreamed.

"I am going to go. I am going to go," Jane cried excitedly, as she walked rapidly along.

"I'm going, too," answered Katie. "I'm past fifteen now, and in another year I'll be old enough to teach. And I'll earn money too; and if we both save, it will be enough to take us both. O Jane, won't it be glorious! We'll learn so much and see so much. Oh, I can hardly wait. But won't I study now? Cube root won't seem half so hard to dig out

when I know I'm digging a way to let me out to college." The enthusiastic girl fairly danced with joy over the prospect of the education that was some day to be hers.

"We'll have to do without lots of things that we had promised ourselves," Jane reminded her.

"I don't care," she answered, cheerfully. "There are better things than new dresses and hats, and we couldn't wear slippers if we had them. You'll have to get Susie hers, though, 'cause you promised, you know."

"Yes," Jane answered, with a little sigh, and for the first time a twinge of selfishness disturbed her soul. Was not her education of more importance than Susie's pleasure? But she loved her little sister, and was loyal to her own word; so she decided that the sacrifice must be made.

All through the remainder of the winter the two girls worked and planned, and every dollar that could be spared was laid away. There was one drain on Jane's resources, however, that tried her severely. Her father was continually demanding money for tobacco. Jane had never realized how rapidly earnings melted away before such a demand as this. He called it "borrowing," and promised to repay her out of his next year's potato crop; but Jane well

knew that she would never see a cent of it again. Sometimes she grew angry, and refused to "lend" to him; but he was so unbearably cross when his tobacco supply gave out that she was glad to purchase peace for the family with half a dollar. Had she but known it, part of her earnings were going for a much worse thing than tobacco.

A saloon had been opened at the Landing that winter, and her father had become one of its customers. He had never had money enough to go upon a very extended spree, and by the time he had walked or rode the five miles to his home the cold air had sobered him, so that his family little dreamed of the habit he had formed nor the reason why his "tobacco money" disappeared so rapidly. All his earnings in the cooper-shop were spent for the liquor poison. All that he could raise in any other way went to the same place.

He grumbled over Jane's "extravagance" in spending her money for "sech fool nonsense as a porch an' a palin' fence. The old ones had been good enough for him, and they ought to be good enough for her." The trip to town and her acquaintance with the James girls, he declared, had "plum spiled her."

Another evidence of her filial disrespect was that she put her money away into some place

known only to herself, instead of intrusting it to his care.

“He never thought a child of his would be so ongrateful to her own father,” he grumbled to himself. When he heard of the girls’ plan for a college education he was more incensed than ever.

“Plum foolishness ! Plum foolishness ! No good’ll ever come of it. There hain’t no call for you to go traipsing off to learn things that you don’t need to know. An’ it’s plum selfishness beside. I’m surprised at you for even thinkin’ of takin’ the bread an’ meat from your folkses’ mouths to spend for a notion of your own. I won’t never consent to it, never,” he declared emphatically.

He was so angry that Jane and Katie were frightened, and were glad to creep away to bed where they sobbed themselves to sleep.

But Katie had whispered hopefully, even through her tears, “Don’t cry so hard, Janie. We’ll manage it some way.”

The depression caused by their father’s stern opposition lasted for weeks. It made Jane’s school duties seem heavier and Katie’s studies harder. The energy had been taken from their lives, and ambition had dwindled as their hopes diminished. They said nothing more about their plans in their father’s presence,

but as time went on their spirits began to rise. Perhaps after awhile he would look at the matter differently. Perhaps his potato crop would be good and the price better, and he would not feel that the family needed so much of Jane's earnings.

As the winter weather cleared away, and the brightness of spring began to dawn over the earth, the buds of joy and hope swelled in the young hearts and the clouds of depression vanished.

So Jane was very happy as she walked along the woodland road that pleasant March evening. There were only three weeks more of school. Then she would be at home. She and Katie had planned to make all they could through the summer by raising chickens, making butter and picking berries. They would have a big garden, which would make a large part of the family living and decrease the expense. They hoped in this way to so work affairs that a major part of the last half of Jane's school money might be saved.

Jane was thinking over all these things, and planning eagerly for the long summer ahead, when she turned the corner of "the little field" and appeared in sight of home. Katie was standing at the gate, waiting for her sister's coming. As soon as Jane came in sight

she ran toward her, crying aloud from fright and excitement.

“What is it? What has happened? Hush, Katie! Tell me quick.”

“Father—father is dead,” the child wailed in terror. “He found your money and he took a lot and went to the Landing and got drunk—drunk, Janie! An’ he fell out of the wagon coming down Rocky Hill, an’ Mr. Rogers found him lying there dead. An’ they brought him home, an’ he’s there in the house now, an’ I’m afraid to go in. O Janie, I thought you would never come!” She threw herself into her sister’s arms in an agony of grief and terror. Jane was utterly overcome. The shock was too great for her to fathom the depth of her trouble all at once. She sank down on a bank at the side of the road, holding Katie tightly in her arms, and strove to soothe the excited girl. She could not cry herself. She was too stunned for that. She only realized that something terrible had happened, that the awful shadow of death was in their home, and like Katie she feared to enter it.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

THE two girls sat beside the road until the evening shadows began to fall heavily, and the chill of night was encircling them. Then they rose, and with fear and trembling opened the gate and stole around to the side door of the basement. The room was lighted by the cheerful glow of a great log fire, and the warmth and brightness were very pleasant to the two chilled and frightened girls. For a moment the weight lifted from their spirits, and they almost imagined that they had but awakened from an ugly dream.

Mrs. Carter was sitting in her big rocker before the fire, her face buried in her hands. Susie lay curled upon the rug where she had wept herself to sleep. Mrs. Davidson and two of the neighbor women were busying themselves in preparing supper.

The mother looked up as the door closed behind her two daughters, and at sight of Jane she broke out in a wail of grief. For a little while there was a wild and trying scene.

The blackness of death had settled down over this home where there was no ray of Christian hope to lighten the gloom, no faith to pierce through the cloud of grief and reach into the heaven beyond, no Comforter upon whom to stay their souls and lay the burden of their aching hearts. It is to such people as the Carters that death comes with his wildest terrors and his heaviest grief. They knew only his awfulness. Death to them is not "a shadow"; it is the blackness of eternal despair.

It was some time before Mrs. Davidson and her two assistants were able in any wise to calm the widow and her two terror-stricken daughters. It was only when perfectly exhausted with weeping that Jane allowed her friend to lead her gently to a chair and remove her school wraps, while the soothing voice said, softly :

"Why, child, your hands are like ice. You are chilled through. Come here by the fire and get thoroughly warmed. We will have some hot supper ready in a few minutes, and then you must eat." Jane protested that she was not hungry, that she could not eat anything, but Mrs. Davidson insisted.

"You are excited now, Janie, and do not realize that, after your busy day, your long

walk through the chill air and with only a cold lunch at noon, you really need a hot supper. It will make you feel better, and you need it to keep up your strength."

So she prevailed upon the girls to eat, and with quiet words and ways turned their thoughts for a time from the grief that was upon them.

Meanwhile, at Mrs. Davidson's direction, the other women brought bedding from the upper rooms, and prepared a place where the family might sleep in the big basement room.

"Oh!" sighed Katie, wearily, as she noted their work, "I'm so glad. I'm so tired, and I just couldn't go upstairs to sleep. I don't believe I can ever sleep up there again. Can you, Janie?"

"I don't know," answered Jane, hardly hearing her sister's question. Her eyes were fixed upon the fire with a heartsick, despairing look. Her mind seemed far removed from what was going on about her. Katie looked at her uneasily.

"Come, go to bed, Janie," she said, pulling at her sister's sleeve. Jane answered,

"No, not now, I'm not sleepy." So Katie reluctantly left her.

Susie was removed to bed, and Mrs. Carter was prevailed upon to lie down beside her;

but Jane only shook her head when the women tried to persuade her to do likewise, and kept her seat before the fire. The two women went away upstairs to talk with the men who were busy there, and Mrs. Davidson came and sat down beside the girl, putting her arms about her, and drawing Jane's head down upon her shoulder. The gentle touch of sympathy broke the spell that was upon her, and the girl wept long and bitterly. At length she raised her despairing eyes to her friend's face and whispered.

"It was my money did it! It was all my fault. Oh how can I bear it?"

"My dear child!" exclaimed the lady, startled by this unexpected idea. "You must not allow yourself to look upon it in that way. You must not blame yourself for imaginary faults. You have worked hard and earned your money for the sake of helping those you love. Your motives have all been right. You are not to be blamed because your father misused that which you had hoped would help him. His sin is not yours. Your trouble is hard enough to bear without adding to it in this needless way."

"But it has been my money all the time. I did not know it, but he must have been spending it there all winter. I was so happy in

thinking I was helping and making them all more comfortable, and all the while I was doing—this.” She gave a low wail that showed how keen was her suffering.

“You did not do it, Janie. You must put that thought from you. If you did not know what he was doing, how can you be blamed for it? You honored your father with your confidence and your help. You had no reason to believe that he was unworthy of both, and therefore you are innocent in this trouble that has come upon you all. Do not allow yourself to entertain such thoughts for another moment. Instead of that, go to counting up what God has left to you, and try to see what good there is even in this evil.” Jane shook her head hopelessly.

“There is no good. God has put nothing good into my life. I know, without trying to look after it.”

“Let us see,” answered her friend. “There is a text in the Bible that says, ‘In *everything* give thanks, for *this* is the will of God, through Christ Jesus, concerning you.’ We would not be told to give thanks in everything if there was not some good to be found in what comes to us. Are you not thankful that your mother and sisters are left to you? That you have your home? That you have friends to help

you? That you are young and strong, and qualified to earn a good living for those you love? Be thankful that your father was spared to you so long, thankful that you were a good and obedient daughter. Above all, be thankful that there is a Father in heaven who watches over you and knows what is best for you. ‘*This* is the will of God, through Christ Jesus, concerning you.’ No evil can come ‘through Christ Jesus’ who gave his life for the world. He loves you. He would give you only the best things. Can you not trust him?”

“No,” said Jane. “He doesn’t know me, and I don’t know him. If he loves me, why does he send this trouble on me? That is not the way I would treat any one I loved.”

“‘No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: *nevertheless* afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness,’” quoted the minister’s wife. “If your trouble would make you turn to the great Comforter for comfort and help, it would be the greatest blessing that could come to you, even though it now seems grievous. When you were a little child your parents watched over you and kept you from doing what they knew would hurt you. No doubt you often thought them unkind and cried very hard; but now

you can see that they did the best thing for you. God is your heavenly Father. He knows you, even though you think not. He can see ahead and tell what will work out for your best interests. It may be that he sees that by giving you the care of your mother and sisters it will make a true and noble woman of you, and transform your life into one of beauty. It may be that he wants you to remember that death may come at any moment and you must be ready for it. It may be he takes this way of leading you to himself and making you see your need of him. There are many things that he may have in store for you which are to grow out of this very trouble.

“Have you forgotten your stumps, Janie, the ugly things that have proved to be the very elements of beauty in your yard? This trouble is another ‘stump’ in your life, and the Lord means for you to make of it an added beauty to your character. He says, ‘What I do thou knowest not now, but *thou shalt know hereafter.*’ Take that promise and rest upon it.

“Now, dear, you must try to sleep. You are more weary than you realize, and you must gather strength for what lies ahead. You must remember that your mother and sisters will look to you for comfort, and you

must not fail them. It is part of the work that the Lord has given into your hands. Come, dear."

Jane was soothed and awed by her friend's words, and wearily obeyed her instructions. Her sorrows were soon forgotten in the heavy sleep that came to her, and Mrs. Davidson watched tenderly over her.

"Ah!" the lady murmured, pitifully, "if I could only have said 'Be thankful that your father was such a faithful Christian. Be thankful that he was ready to go, and that death was but the doorway to eternal life for him. Be thankful that you can hope to meet him again some day.' Ah! if I could have said these things, it would have been comfort indeed; but alas! these causes for thankfulness are lacking here."

It was late the next morning when Jane awoke. There was a dull sense of trouble that came with her waking, then she sprang up with a sudden responsibility. "Her school! What would become of that?"

Mrs. Davidson quieted her by saying, "Do not worry. We thought of that and sent word to Mr. Watkins. He has dismissed school for a week, and he is here now. He came over to see if he could be of any help, and to express his sympathy."

Thus in every possible way did the neighbors and friends show their kindness to the stricken family and strive to ease their pain. Not only through that trying day, but through many succeeding days, the minister and his wife proved pillars of strength to these people who turned to them and clung to them in their misery.

At the end of the week Jane's school work was resumed, and carried to a successful finish. She felt very glad and proud when Mr. Watkins shook hands with her at the close of "the last day" and said:

"Wa-al, Miss Carter, you've taught a pretty fair school—yes, I should say it was pretty middlin' fair. You hain't done much thrashin'—but mebbe that's because the young uns took to you so well—an' you hain't hardly give 'em as much spellin' book as I used to git when I was a-schoolin'. But take it all round, the young uns have done first-rate, an' a sight better'n they done a year ago. So if you want the school again next winter, I'm agreeable to your havin' it."

For all of which Jane thanked him so heartily, and with such a grateful look in her eyes, that he liked her better than ever, and declared to his wife that she was "Actooally the best-natured red-headed girl he had ever seen."

The school fairly finished, Jane, Katie and Mrs. Carter sat down and planned their work for the summer.

"You girls had better go on jest as you 'lowed to do before pap died," the mother said. "Susie an' I can manage the housework an' the churnin', an' you can put in the garden an' raise chickens. I'll git neighbor Rogers to plow an' put in the pertaters, an' you two can 'tend 'em, I reckon. Then there's berries. Peddler Bates told me we could sell all we could pick down to the Landing. The storekeeper ships 'em to the city. You girls can pick 'em between times; an' I 'low we'll be able to keep ourselves, without usin' up what's left of Janie's school money. We'll try an' keep that in case of sickness, or fer fear the pertater crop should go back on us."

This plan was closely followed out. Much to lazy Susie's dissatisfaction she found herself destined to work the churndasher three times a week, and wash dishes three times a day—an arrangement which seriously interfered with her idle pleasures.

Jane and Katie went into the field and the garden, and worked hard at their allotted tasks. Their garden flourished so well that they found themselves able to sell some of their "truck" to the storekeeper at the Landing. Their

potato crop was so carefully tended that it far excelled the crops that their shiftless father had raised, and their chickens well repaid for the faithful attention given them.

It was only the result of faithful, steady, careful work, but at the close of the summer the family were surprised and rejoiced to find that they had really advanced, and that their little store had increased rather than diminished.

CHAPTER XIV.

A GLIMPSE UPWARD.

WHEN Will Carter received Jane's letter announcing his father's death he was stunned by the news. Death was one thing upon which he had not reckoned when he said good-bye to his loved ones and went out into the world. He thought of nothing except the fortune he was going to make and take back to them. The boy really loved his parents and sisters, and perhaps loved his father the best of all. As the firstborn, and the only son, he had been his father's especial favorite, and they had been almost constant companions. He had meant to do great things for his father "some day"; but now the father was gone, and "some day" would never come.

The manner of his father's death was the bitterest part of the blow, and—like Janie—Will found in it an especial subject for remorse.

"If I had stayed at home I would have been with him all the time. He always took

me with him when he went to the Landing. He would never have gone near the saloon if I had been with him, and then this would never have happened. Oh, I wish I had never come away."

Such were his thoughts as he followed his plow through the long furrows of his uncle's field, and many were the tears that dropped unheeded upon the plow-handles. He tormented himself so much with this view of the question that he forgot to consider what effect his father's death would have upon the rest of the family, until Bessie asked about it.

She had studied earnestly over it, ever since the news had been received, and waited impatiently for Will to say something that would show that he was considering it also. As the days slipped into weeks without his appearing to think of his duty in the case, her impatience changed to indignation; and at the first opportunity she put it at him in this wise:

"Will, what will your mother do for a living, now that your father is dead?"

"Why—" Will answered, slowly, "I suppose things will go on about the same as ever. She'll maybe get one of the neighbors to do the plowing, and the girls can tend the crop. There ain't much ground, you know," he added hastily, as he noted the look of indignant sur-

prise on his cousin's face. "Maybe Jane will hire a boy to tend it, bein' as she has made so much teaching school."

"But don't you suppose her money will be nearly gone by this time? They have had to live on it all winter, and then there are the funeral expenses beside," Bessie replied.

"Funeral expenses wouldn't amount to very much," Will replied, uneasily. "Neighbor Simmons makes all the coffins that's needed in the neighborhood, and he never charges more than ten dollars. Then the neighbors do all the rest, so you see that wouldn't take as much as you think—not near as much as it does out here. No, I ain't afraid but they'll get on all right. If they don't, all they have to do is to let me know, and I'll sell a load of hogs and send them some money."

Will felt that he had said quite a magnanimous thing, and that Bessie ought to be satisfied with the proper spirit he had shown. But she was not.

"Perhaps they will think that if you have any money to spare you will send it without their having to ask for it; and so they may not want to trouble you, thinking that you cannot help them."

"Well, I can't—very well—just now, that's a fact. My hogs ain't hardly fat enough, and

beside, the price is off a cent and a half. But when I do sell I'll send them some," said Will, compromisingly. Bessie turned angrily away. She could not trust herself to talk any longer with her selfish cousin, knowing that she would surely say things that would make him angry, and perhaps work disaster to the cause she was trying to plead.

As for Will, he was thoroughly uncomfortable. He saw that Bessie was disgusted with him, and his conscience troubled him also. He knew that it was his duty to help his mother and sisters, but he could not make up his mind to do it at the sacrifice it would be just then. He went out to his pens and looked at his fine fat hogs, at the crib filled with corn which his money had bought to feed them, and his heart swelled with pride and avarice.

"They're just doing fine," he said to himself. "It would be a burning shame to sell them now, when the market may go up any day." The more he thought about it the bigger that "cent and a half" grew.

"Girls don't know much about business," he grumbled. "There ain't any rush that I can see. When I do sell, then'll be time enough to talk about giving away my money. It's all for them anyhow, and I'd like to know how any one can expect me to get ahead if I

have to keep breaking into my capital all the time."

So he compromised between greed and conscience by writing to Jane that he "couldn't send them any money just then, because his hogs were not ready to sell; but if they needed some at any time, to let him know, and he'd get the money for them—even if he had to borrow it."

"There now," he said, complacently, as he sealed up his letter. "That ought to be liberal enough to satisfy anybody. It costs like everything to borrow money, but I'd do it before I'd let them suffer." Then he mailed his letter and went on his regular way: but his awakened conscience refused to be satisfied with the arguments which had hitherto seemed so plausible. The good seed which Bessie had sown in the stony ground of his heart had taken root, and was yet destined to bear fruit.

When Jane received the letter at the little country post office she hoped far more than she realized that her brother had sent them help, so that their summer's work need not be so hard, and that they need not encroach upon the small sum she had left. She did not open the letter until she had reached the solitude of the woods on her way homeward, then she read it carefully through, and sighed as she

folded it away into its envelope. She and Katie had talked over this very matter, and had hoped that their brother would be able to help them. And this was the answer.

Her own store had dwindled much below one hundred dollars, and if their garden and potatoes failed their living would have to be cut very close to make it reach over till after her school opened the next October.

She did not reproach her brother. She did not know how much he had accumulated by investing his careful savings, and "turning them over" several times in the two years he had been away.

"Katie will be so disappointed," she murmured. "And Susie will have to do without her lawn dress after all. But then it isn't Will's fault. His letter shows he's real sorry. I did hope that he was making more money than he seems to be doing."

Katie did not take her disappointment so quietly. She grew quite angry over it, and wished vainly that Will had never been persuaded into leaving home.

"If he had stayed we wouldn't have to work so hard, and you could get a little rest this summer. You've worked awful hard, Janie, and however are you going to get time to study for examination again in September?"

To which Jane answered quietly,

“It will come out right, Katie. Don’t worry.” Then she went out into her garden and set vigorously to work.

The sorrow and care that had fallen upon this young girl were already beginning to work a transformation in her character. In studying how best to help her mother and her sisters she was forgetting herself and her own ambitions. Through her sympathy for their grief she was more tender and less easily irritated. Because of the pressure of the work laid upon her, she had no time to repine over the hardness of her lot, nor the narrowness of her sphere. All hope of the coveted college course had been buried in her father’s grave. Once more her native hills and forests lifted, but this time it was not to open out into wider and more beautiful distances, but to settle down forever upon the old, narrow boundaries.

In these days of sore trial she turned more and more to Mrs. Davidson for comfort and counsel, and through her gentle teachings was learning lessons of divine wisdom.

To her alone the girl had poured out the depth of her disappointment over her buried hopes and her crushed ambitions.

“I can never be anybody,” she sobbed in her despair. “I can never hope to know any

more than I do now. I must stay right here, and just work as long as I live." She buried her face in her friend's lap and wept unrestrainedly. The lady stroked her hair gently until the heaviest of her grief was over; then she said:

"Janie, your life may be shut in on every side, but you have forgotten to look upward. There are no boundaries above you. Thank God, there is no limit to the possibilities opened out to all of us in that direction. You cannot acquire the earthly wisdom which you crave, but there is a wisdom that cometh down from above, which may be yours for the seeking." Jane looked up at her friend eagerly. She remembered having heard those words before, but for the moment could not recall when or where they had been repeated.

"The wisdom that cometh down from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.' Janie, do you want this wisdom?"

The girl had hidden her face in her hands, and was trying to grasp the meaning of the words. At last she answered slowly, "I don't know. I suppose it is the best that I can do."

"Yes," Mrs. Davidson replied promptly.

"It is the best—the *very best*—that any one can do, to accept this 'wisdom from above.'"

Their conversation had been interrupted there, and Jane had gone away with her heart sore and unsatisfied. She had walked slowly homeward through the gathering dusk, and as she looked at the crooked, narrow road, with its unsightly stumps, she had murmured, "So narrow! So narrow!"

Then she looked upward. Far, far beyond the tall trees the blue sky arched pure and clear above her, and even as she looked a tiny star twinkled out of the limitless heights. She gazed, awe-struck. Then as she went slowly onward she said aloud, "It may be narrow, *but it shall be high.*"

As the days went by and she worked faithfully at her tasks, her mind studied constantly over the question of the "Wisdom from on high." The text dwelt ever in her thoughts. "If it would make all of that in my life, wouldn't it be the truly best thing after all?" she asked herself. And at length, instead of looking upon it as "the best substitute" for what she wanted, she began to desire it as "the one thing needful," the very best of all good things, and to reach out for it accordingly.

Thus, although but a few weeks had passed

since her father's death, the blessing hidden in the sorrow was beginning to open out to her.

Through the summer her one recreation was the cultivation of her flowers. With the greatest of care she tended the vines and blossoms that transformed the ugly stumps in the yard into things of beauty; and for the first time she gave names to each one—names that were not even revealed to Mrs. Davidson.

“Here is my bad temper,” she said to herself over one of the most unsightly. “And this one shall be selfishness, and that great big one is ignorance—yes, and there's poverty and hard work and disappointment—there are stumps enough for all of them, and more too; and I won't rest till I get them all covered.”

Who can tell what messages of peace and encouragement and contentment the beautiful blossoms spoke to her heart all the summer through.

CHAPTER XV.

HER NEW AMBITION.

JANE and Katie had been down to the Landing. It was only nine o'clock of a warm August morning, but they had driven the five miles from their home, finished their trading and turned their horse's head toward home.

During Mr. Carter's lifetime the family had sold what butter and eggs they had to spare to the old peddler who passed their home once or twice a week, and obtained in exchange what few groceries and dry goods they needed. When Jane took the management of things she reasoned thus with her mother:

"If old Mr. Bates can make money by taking our produce and selling it at the Landing, we ought to be able to make something by doing it ourselves. He must make something on the groceries he sells us, or he could not afford to run his wagon. If we go to the store to buy our dresses we won't have to choose from one or two or three pieces, and we can get prettier ones and not pay any more either.

So, mother, if you are willing, Katie and I will try what we can make by taking the things to the store ourselves."

"Well, you kin do jest as you please about it. Ef you want to go to all that trouble I'm sure I don't keer, though fer my part I don't see any need of it. Old Bates has allus done well by us, an' I was allus well enough pleased with his goods. But law there's no accountin' fer girls' whims. I s'pose you want to go more fer the sake of goin' than anything else. But I don't keer, ef you want to go to all that bother. Only you'll have to start powerful airly, so's the butter won't be ile before you get there, and so's you kin git back to do your hoein'. Be keerful not to drive old Jim too hard, an' don't stand around gassin' with them store fellows after your tradin's done. I don't want my girls to make fools of themselves."

So the arrangement had been made. All through the berry season the girls had been up and off by four o'clock in the morning, making several trips a week. It was no short or easy journey over the rough, hilly, rocky road, with "old Jim" going at a snail's pace; and they thought themselves very swift indeed if they were able to start on their homeward way by nine o'clock. Still, they en-

joyed their trips wonderfully. It was their one pleasure, their one glimpse out into the busy world, and they looked forward eagerly to "Landing day." Jane had succeeded in obtaining so much more for her produce that her mother had been satisfied after the first few trips that it was a wise move, and therefore looked upon it more favorably. Thus it came about that the two backwoods girls in their rickety, one-horse spring wagon became a familiar sight to the dwellers at the Landing.

On the morning in question they had done particularly well with their produce. They had taken the usual amount of butter and eggs, and had a lot of late "garden truck," and a coop of young chickens in addition, so that they had been able to purchase their needed supply of groceries and also to get a neat, light calico dress and a pair of shoes for Jane to wear to Vernon to the teachers' examination. The minds of both girls dwelt upon these two extra purchases as they went on their way homeward.

"Your dress will be awfully pretty, Janie," said Katie, after they had left the little town behind them.

"Yes," answered Jane. "I think it's the prettiest dress I ever had, and I'll get Mrs.

Davidson to fit it for me so that it will look nice."

"I wish I could go to Vernon with you," sighed Katie, "but then I know I can't. Somebody has to stay and help mother, and tend to things. But then I can't help wishing that Susie would do it, so that I could go."

"Susie is young yet, and she hasn't learned that people have got to do a great many things that they don't like if they mean to get on in the world. She'll learn it after while," answered Jane, kindly.

"Well, I can't look at it just that way," replied Katie, a little bitterly. "She's thirteen now, and it seems to me it's about time that she was beginning to learn." Jane wisely made no answer to this remark, and the two rode for some distance in silence. Suddenly Katie asked:

"What do you mean to do about going away to school? You never say anything about it any more. Have you given it up?" The question struck Jane so unexpectedly that she found it hard to answer. Her heart had been so set on gaining an education that she could hardly bear to think of giving it up, although she saw that her way was hedged about and that her hopes could never be ful-

filled. It was some moments before she could control herself enough to answer her sister's questions calmly; then she said:

"Yes, I have given it all up. I could not take my school money and go away and leave you all without anything to live on. You couldn't get along by yourself, tending the garden and potatoes and taking these long trips alone. Even if you could, I'd hate myself for letting you do it. No, Katie, the Lord means for me to stay right here and do the things he has set for me to do. I can't help feeling bad about it sometimes, for I did want to go; but I'd rather do what I know is right than to do the wrong thing simply because it pleases me best."

"I don't see how you can feel that way," said Katie, the tears starting to her eyes. "I don't believe I can give up that easy. I wanted you to go, and I wanted to go myself. It was all so nice as we planned it."

"And I mean that you shall go, Katie. My giving it up does not mean that you will have to. It only means that it will make it more possible for you."

"Do you think I'd be that mean, Jane Carter?" flashed Katie. "If it would be selfish and wrong for you, it would be selfish and wrong for me. Do you think I'd go off

and leave everything for you? Besides, I wouldn't want to go alone. I'd want you along."

"But you see we can't both go, and I can manage here better than you could. I've studied it all over and over, and I believe we can fix it so you can go in a year or two. Next year you will be able to teach, too. What I make will keep the three of us very nicely, and you can have all your earnings to take you to school. And don't you see, Katie, it wouldn't be selfish for you because you would only be fitting yourself to earn higher wages and help us more in the end."

"Then why can't you do that and let me stay at home?" asked unselfish Katie.

"Because mother would not be satisfied, and Susie wouldn't help you as well as she would me," answered Jane.

"I think Susie is real mean," said Katie, angrily.

"No," answered the elder sister, "she does not intend it that way. She is only thoughtless."

"Well, it's pure selfishness, and selfishness is meanness, even if it is thoughtless. That only makes it worse. She's old enough to think," said Katie. Jane laughed a little.

"Don't you see that you and she could not

work together?" Katie laughed, in spite of her vexation.

"I guess you are about right, Janie." Then, more soberly, she asked: "What's become of your bad temper that used to fly up so easy? Some way you seem to have lost a whole lot of it. What did it? School teaching?"

"Ye-es, partly," answered Jane. "I found I had to control myself when I was dealing with other people, and that I could do it well enough when I found I had to. That made me ashamed to be so fiery at home. Then when I found I could not get away from here to learn the wisdom of the world, I determined to get the 'wisdom that cometh down from above,' and it is 'first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated,' so I've tried to begin at the beginning of it, and perhaps after awhile I'll get around to the 'mercy and good fruits.'" Jane had almost forgotten her auditor as she spoke, so deeply was she engrossed in the thoughts that were embodied in her new ambition. Katie did not answer for a moment, then she asked, anxiously:

"Jane, are you getting religious?"

"Ye-es," said Jane, smiling a little, "I guess that is what you would call it." Katie was so overwhelmed by this statement that she sat and studied it over. At length she said slowly:

"I used to think getting religious must be dreadfully disagreeable to the one who did it and everybody else beside, but when I went to Vernon some way it seemed different. And now if it means making one as much different as it has you, and you say you are just beginning, I believe it's a pretty nice thing after all."

This sisterly tribute was very touching and very comforting to Jane.

"I am glad if I have improved enough for any one to be able to see it," she said, humbly. "It isn't easy work, and I get discouraged sometimes, and think it isn't any use to try; my bad temper does get the upper hand with me so often, and I find it so hard to do the right thing. But I've found that, as Mrs. Davidson told me, the 'wisdom from above' is the best kind because it helps over the hard places and makes me content with the narrow places."

"I wish you'd tell me all about it, and how you happened to think of it," Katie said, as Jane relapsed into silence. So while Jim plodded sleepily along the story was recited to the eager young listener. Katie's soul took fire at it. She had determined to "learn everything there was in the world to learn," and had set herself at it. But here was a "wisdom which is not of this world" which

was suddenly revealed to her, and, best of all, it was a wisdom which she could gain even there in that little corner of the backwoods. Her cheeks flushed and her eyes flashed. She drew a long breath as Jane finished the fascinating story.

"I'm going to learn more about it, Janie," she said, earnestly. "We'll get grandfather's old Bible that is in the 'best room,' and we'll study about it. Has it any index so we'll know where to look?"

"I don't hardly think it has," replied Jane. "We can ask Mrs. Davidson, though."

"Hurry up and let's get home," said impetuous Katie. "I'm anxious to see. Besides, it's getting late. Just see where the sun is."

"It is getting high. It must be eleven o'clock. I was so busy thinking that I forgot to notice the time," and Jane gave Jim so sudden a slap with the lines as to surprise him into the semblance of a trot.

Susie was watching for them when they got home.

"What kept you so long?" she asked. "Mother began to be afraid that you'd broken down, or that Jim had gone lame again. Let me see your new dress, Janie. I do wish I could have a new dress. Jane gets everything," she grumbled.

“But Jane teaches school and makes pretty near all the money we have, and she deserves things. Anyway, she just has to have them so she can go to Vernon,” replied Katie, indignantly. She and Susie carried the egg cases, the butter jar and the various bundles to the house, while Jane unharnessed and fed the faithful old horse, and by the time the elder sister had reached the house, the little dispute between the younger ones had been forgotten.

Katie did not forget the conversation held by the way, nor the new ambition that had taken possession of her. At the first opportunity the old Bible was found and dusted, and she carried it to the room she and Jane occupied together. To her great disappointment there was no “index,” so she had to content herself with turning the pages aimlessly and picking up the gems of truth contained therein. The chronology, the biography, the history, the geography, the prophetic puzzles of the “higher critics” did not disturb her; but she found therein “Jesus Christ and him crucified,” who is the source of all wisdom and the satisfaction of every longing soul.

It may seem strange that the Bible was “as a sealed book” to a girl sixteen years of age, and in this gospel land at that; but hers is far

from being an uncommon case. There are many homes, some of them professedly Christian homes, too, where the children know almost as little in regard to God's Word as did these two poor girls who had been brought up in a home where religion was unknown. In their eagerness to acquire the heavenly wisdom, they placed themselves above many who would have sneered at their uncultivated ways, and scorned even to admit them to their supposedly superior society.

CHAPTER XVI.

SUSIE'S DESIRES.

SUSIE was supposed to be churning. In reality she was sitting on a rock, dabbling her bare feet in the cool spring water, and enjoying life in the manner best suited to herself. She liked to be down at the spring, and spent much time there.

This spring was one of the beauty-spots of nature, and would have filled the soul of an artist with delight. It was situated in the wood-lot, across the road from the Carter house, at the foot of some rocky steps that led down the steep bank below the road. From beneath the high bank down which the path led, a stream of water gushed out through an opening about a foot high and ten feet wide, flowed over a bed of solid rock for several feet, then rushed over a second little clift, and foaming and gurgling disappeared amid the thickets of the deep ravine. The bank above the spring was almost perpendicular, and was covered by moss and ferns and overhung by mighty oak trees. On each side

the hills closed down to the ravine, and so steep were they that it was difficult work to climb them, even though aided by the bushes that grew upon their sides.

After a heavy rain sister streams came tumbling in white showers down the sides of the ravine, and joined the main torrent a short distance below the fall. These streams were dry the greater part of the time, but the "big spring" ran steadily on, no matter how long the drouth. On the farther side of the spring was a ledge of rock a few inches higher than the current of the stream, and several feet wide. Here the Carters had constructed a rude spring-house, which was reached by stepping-stones, and here all the work of butter-making was done during the warm months of the year. No wonder their butter was always fresh and sweet and solid, and commanded the best price at the Landing!

It is not surprising that Susie's sluggish nature found keen delight in the quiet solitude of such a spot as this. It was too far from the house for her to be easily interrupted by calls to work. So she sat contentedly upon the rock, dabbling her feet in the cool water, watching the birds that fluttered among the trees, or flew down to the stream to drink and bathe, and letting her mind run vaguely

from one line of thought to another in this fashion :

“I do wonder where all that water comes from, and why it never all runs out. I should think it would come to an end some time. I’d like to crawl under that rock and see what is in there, but Janie says it’s all dark and I’d only stick fast and get drowned. I wish I could run away from here like the stream does. I’d like to see all the places it goes through before it gets to the river. It doesn’t have anything to do except run and sing, and it never has to churn. Oh, the horrid churning! I wish I hadn’t remembered it. Why can’t butter grow on trees, or else just gather itself in the milk without all this bother? I wish Janie could make a whole lot more money so we wouldn’t have to make butter to sell, or else that Will would get as rich as Uncle William and send for us all to go out there to live. Maybe I’ll see a big boat like the one he went on when Katie and I go down to the Landing to-morrow. Maybe I’d better get to churning or this butter won’t be done and then we can’t go.” She got slowly up from her shady seat, and had barely resumed her place at the churn-dasher when Katie came running down the steps.

“Is the butter ready to work?” she asked.

"No," replied Susie, slowly. "It don't appear to come very good." Katie opened the lid and looked into the churn.

"I don't believe you've churned this milk a bit. What have you been doing? Oh, I see," as she discovered the tracks which Susie's wet feet had made across the ledge. "You've been playing in the water. I've the biggest mind in the world not to take you down to the Landing with me to-morrow."

"Don't say that, Katie. Please don't. I didn't mean to fool so long. My arms got tired and I sat down to rest and I just forgot. Only do let me go with you. I've never been to the Landing, and I'll feel dreadful if I can't go." The dasher flew as fast as the pleading tongue, and Katie's wrath melted at sight of the tears in her little sister's eyes.

"If you'll keep right on and not fool away any more time, I'll let you go. But I do get so tired of your lazy ways. Aren't you ever going to get over them, Susie Carter? You're getting to be a great big girl, and you hardly know anything."

"I don't care if I don't," returned Susie, crossly. "I don't mean to teach school, so I don't need to study."

"But when Janie and I are teaching you'll

have to help mother with all the work, and you'll find out that won't be so very easy."

"It'll be time enough to worry about that when the time comes. You can't teach school till next year, and maybe Will will come home before that time and we won't any of us have to work," was the hopeful reply.

"Don't set your heart too much on Will. He may stay away years and years like Uncle William did. I don't believe he's making much money, for when father died he wrote to Jane that he'd like to send us some money to help along, only he hadn't any; but he would send some whenever he got it. He hasn't sent any yet, and that proves he isn't getting rich very fast. You'll have to learn to depend on yourself, Susie Carter. It don't do to count on other people's money or work to keep one from starving. You're well enough now, but what will you do when you get big? You couldn't even make a living doing somebody's kitchen-work."

"Oh," said Susie, carelessly, "I'll get married. Then I'll have somebody to make a living for me."

"Huh!" cried Katie, scornfully. "It would be a pretty poor sort of man that would want to marry a girl that was too lazy to try to earn her own living. But that's neither here

nor there. I've got to go back to work, and I want you to hurry and get that churning done. Jane will get home from Vernon this afternoon, and we want to get all our work done before she comes, for she will have lots of things to tell us."

Katie vanished as quickly as she had come, and Susie was aroused sufficiently to keep at her work until it was finished. Then she clambered up the side of the ravine, and went in search of wild-grapes which she knew were beginning to ripen. But Katie's little lecture was not forgotten.

"I don't see why she needs to be so cross," the child grumbled. "I'm only a little girl yet, and I don't need to work for a living. When the time comes then I'll think about it. I want to have a good time now, and I just mean to have it. It's none of her business anyway. She ain't my boss."

The discovery of a heavily-laden vine distracted her mind from her unpleasant thoughts, and filled her mouth with something more agreeable than cross words. She tore her dress on the bushes, and scratched her bare feet on the briars, but in spite of both mishaps it was a happy little girl that ran home at noon with lips and teeth as black as ink and her sunbonnet filled with a supply of grapes for future enjoyment.

“It’s no use for me to say anything to her,” Katie said to herself. “It only makes her worse. If she chooses to live that way, and enjoys herself best so, I’ll just let her alone; it will save hateful feelings and cross words on both sides.”

Which sensible conclusion proved that Katie’s search for the “wisdom that cometh down from above” had not been entirely in vain.

The winter wore rapidly by, Jane found her work in the schoolroom more and more pleasant, and the pupils of “District No. 12” received such a stimulus from her energy and love of wisdom as to call forth their own endeavors as had never been done before. Mr. Watkins viewed the progress of the school with unbounded satisfaction.

“I declare, she’s the best teacher we’ve ever had—ef she is only a gal. And she’s actooally the best-natured red-headed gal I’ve ever seen. She do beat all.” Which was his highest meed of praise.

Jane made another advance in her schoolwork that winter. She did it very timidly, with shrinking heart, but it had impressed itself upon her as “the right thing to do,” and that was what she was striving for. On the first morning of school in very simple language she

told her pupils of the "wisdom from above," and the help it would be to them in their search for earthly wisdom. She read them a short passage from the Epistle of James in regard to this wisdom, and then offered a prayer for Divine help and guidance in the studies of the day. It was a very short and stammering prayer but the true spirit was in it, and Jane's heart was light all day from the consciousness of having done "the right thing." The pupils were profoundly impressed, not so much by what she said as by the earnestness with which she spoke, and, although they said nothing, they respected her the more for the stand she had taken.

It is not to be supposed that the work of the winter was all smooth and easy and pleasant. There were days of deep discouragement and utter weariness, days of rebellion on the part of pupils and irritation on the part of the teacher. There was rain and sleet and snow and mud and cold to be endured. There were long lonely walks to and from school, and times when the creek was so high and the foot log so slippery that the little teacher had to crawl across on hands and knees. All teachers meet with more or less of such trials as these, but they can be endured when one takes each day as it comes, and does not worry over

what is ahead nor fret over annoyances left behind.

The winter was a very busy one for Katie. She was studying hard in preparation for taking the teachers' examination in the fall. More than that, she was looking ahead to the college course that had become her ambition. She and Jane had held many conversations about it, and the elder sister had succeeded in persuading the younger one to go ahead and obtain that which was not possible for both of them to achieve. Katie had become convinced that she could not take Jane's place in the home, and that therefore it would not be selfish for her to prepare herself to be of much greater assistance to the family by educating herself for a better position. So she began to study and to work for that which lay more than a year ahead of her. Beside her work in the common school branches she took one or two higher studies, and by the time the winter was over felt that she had made good advance in her extra work.

During the summer Mr. Davidson offered to give her instruction in a beginner's course in Latin, and the offer was eagerly accepted.

Susie did not view these proceedings with an approving eye. Katie's extra study left more of the home work for her to perform, which

was far from agreeable to her. She had counted much on the benefits to be derived from the money which Katie would earn in teaching, and now Katie was actually intending to keep it all for herself.

“Talk about selfishness,” she grumbled, as she bent over the hoe which now fell to her share, “Katie’s the worst kind of selfish. She needn’t talk to me about it any more. It’s a good thing for mother and me that Jane is not like her. Well, when she’s gone there’ll only be three of us to live off what we have here, so maybe it won’t be so bad after all.”

Foolish Susie thought to find her happiness in “doing just as she pleased,” regardless of the rights and feelings of others: but she found it a thorny, uncomfortable road.

A life of selfishness is the narrowest and least satisfactory of all lives; and the one who travels it finds herself farther and farther from the goal of true happiness.

The discontented, grasping spirit is continually reaching out for more good than falls to its share; and envy and jealousy, impart a bitter flavor to what might otherwise prove the sweetest of pleasures.

Alas! for the ones who allow their feet to stray into this most unhappy road through life.

CHAPTER XVII.

TWO HUNDRED MILES APART.

It would take too long to record all the events of the next year. Jane and Katie both worked hard in their schools, and Susie found her hands unpleasantly full at home. Her mother was growing old, and was unable to do as much work as had been her custom; so Susie had it to do, and her mother would allow no shirking.

“Here you be, a great big girl nearly fifteen years old, and you hardly know how to do anything. When I was your age I could jest work around all the girls, an’ I wasn’t too lazy to do it, neither. I don’t see where you got your shiftless ways. It must hev come from the Carter side of the family, fer there hain’t none of it on the Ferguson side, that’s sure.” With such words as these the old lady scolded, and never stopped to consider that she herself was much to blame for having allowed her daughter to form such idle, selfish habits.

Susie tried to persuade her mother to put a

stop to Katie's plans for a college course, but Mrs. Davidson had forestalled her.

The minister's wife had convinced Mrs. Carter that the good of the family would be advanced by giving Katie a chance to earn higher wages. It was by no means a high standpoint upon which to base her plea, but it was quite as high as Mrs. Carter's limited intellectual abilities were able to attain. Katie's own moral, intellectual and social gain would have been beyond her comprehension, so Mrs. Davidson did not attempt to urge them.

One point only troubled the mother.

"I'm afeard it will make Katie stuck up, an' dissatisfied with her home an' all of us. She'll git too high an' mighty to 'sociate with us backwooders."

Mrs. Davidson smiled pleasantly over that.

"I don't feel too high and mighty to live here and associate with you all, and I have been through this same course that Katie wants to take," she answered.

Mrs. Carter looked at her critically.

"It hain't made you high an' mighty, that's a fact, but it has made you a sight different from the folks around here. Ef I was right shore that Katie would come through it as sensible as you have, I wouldn't mind her goin'. We can git along well enough without

her school money, an' ef she'd rather put it into her head than onto her back, why that's her business. I 'low to let my children be happy in their own way."

Thereafter Mrs. Carter was quite willing to agree to her daughters' plans, and to help them along as far as possible, so poor Susie grumbled and growled in vain. She was in a hopeless minority.

The preparation of Katie's wardrobe was a thing that occasioned much anxious care and thought on the part of the whole family. But for Mrs. Davidson's superior knowledge and skill they would have made but sorry work of preparing the girl to enter the new and unknown world before her. In one of the "missionary boxes" which an Eastern church had sent to the minister's family was a nice piece of black brilliantine. This Mrs. Davidson had intended to make into a dress for herself, but now she determined to deny herself for the sake of helping the girl who was struggling so hard to improve herself.

"I am sure the good ladies who sent it to me would be glad to know that it had gone to help a young girl who had proved herself worthy of it, and calico will do me just as well this winter," she said to her husband, who answered her gently :

“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

The brilliantine made a best dress for the young student, which appeared wonderfully beautiful and elegant to her and awakened Susie's unbounded envy. A second-hand blue cashmere from the same box was transformed into a neat travelling dress. These, together with a few simple calicoes for everyday wear, formed the sum total of Katie's outward apparel. Her entire outfit was simple and plain, and cost but a very small sum.

Mrs. Davidson wrote to the principal of her *alma mater* and succeeded in obtaining a place for Katie in that institution, with the privilege of working out her board and tuition.

Thus all needful preparations were made, and in due course of time Katie said good-bye to her home and started out on her chosen path in search of wisdom.

An elderly friend of Mr. James was going on a business trip that would take him through the town which was Katie's destination, and he kindly promised to take care of the young traveller and see her safely to her journey's end. So the little trunk was loaded into the spring-wagon very early one September morning, and with Jane for a driver the trip to Ver-

non was made. A few needed articles were here added to Katie's supply, and the James girls made both sisters extremely happy by purchasing a pretty hat and wrap as parting gifts to their ambitious friend. Jane thought no one could look any prettier or more stylish than her sister did the next morning as she disappeared into the train that soon carried her rapidly away.

An hour later Jane turned back on her solitary homeward way. The James girls begged her to prolong her visit, but she pleaded home duties and could not be prevailed upon to tarry. In truth she was so heartsick and lonely over Katie's departure that she wanted to get away to the solitude of the woods where she could give vent to her grief.

So the plodding old horse turned his head homeward, and his lonely young driver let him go as he pleased while she gave free course to her feelings. She had not realized how much she would miss her bright sister until she had seen the train carry her away, then the full sense of her desolation swept over her. There was no one at home now to whom she could turn for companionship. She and Katie had planned and studied and worked and hoped together. Now Katie had gone

where she would have the stimulus of other better cultivated minds, but for her there was only solitude.

The old horse trudged away to the southwest with the one sister, the railroad train flew northeast with the other, and night would find them two hundred miles apart. To Jane it was a limitless distance, measured by the gait of her horse. To Katie, on the flying train, it did not seem nearly so great, for she did not realize the length of distance passed over.

The loss of Katie's companionship was not the only grief that this parting brought to Jane. She had longed with all the strength of her nature for the chance to go as Katie had gone that morning to see and learn the wonderful things of the outside world, to make of herself an educated and cultured woman. The hope of accomplishing this had been so strong that it died hard. All that she desired most in life she had given up for the sake of this younger sister, and for the sakes of the mother and sister at home. The girl on the far-away train represented the ambitions of the elder sister who plodded through the dense woods alone. A sudden comforting thought struck the lonely girl:

"I will pretend that Katie is Jane," she said, aloud. "I will try to imagine that it is I who

went to school. She shall stand in my place and I will stand in hers, and when she writes of all the beautiful things she sees and learns I will try to imagine that I am the one who is seeing and learning. Then perhaps I will not feel so badly."

With such thoughts as these her mind was occupied as she travelled slowly homeward. It was sundown as she turned the corner of the "little field," and her spirits rose as she neared the shelter and companionship of home. Indeed, she was quite cheerful all the evening as she recounted the events of her trip to her mother and Susie, and waxed eloquent over Katie's nice appearance and the kindness of the James girls. She had taken up her cross bravely, and was determined to carry it on cheerfully, until she could lay it down triumphantly.

Katie's journey was a maze of wonders. It was well for her that she had so kind and experienced a guide as Mr. Burson to explain the difficulties of her way. He taught her the mysteries of checks and tickets and transfers, and kept her so entertained all the way that she did not have a chance to be homesick. Arrived at her college town he sought the steward of the college, who was at the depot to receive incoming students, and placed the

young girl in his care. Katie's heart sank as he left her and returned to the train which carried him away. The depot was full of laughing, chattering girls, but she felt utterly alone. Every one seemed to know some one else except just herself.

They all seemed to be "old girls," as they laughed and jested with the steward during their ride in the omnibus in a way that showed an everyday acquaintance.

"What are we going to have for supper, Mr. Andrews?" some one asked.

"Samp and dried apples," was the gentleman's answer, which was received with screams of merriment and groans of pretended dismay.

"Girls! girls! Here are the 'boundaries!' Give a last groan for the freedom left behind you," cried another merry voice; and such a dismal groan went round the crowd that even Katie was obliged to laugh.

A few minutes more and they were all ushered into the lofty and elegant reception-room, where they received a hearty welcome from the waiting president and teachers of the school. Experienced eyes at once detected the lonely "new girl" who had sunk helplessly into a chair near the door, and a sweet-faced teacher came at once to receive her and put her at ease in her new home. It was not long

till the newcomers were dispersed to their various rooms, and Katie was introduced to the young lady who was to be her roommate.

The ignorant backwoods girl was fairly dazed by the largeness of everything about her. The long halls with their multitude of doors, the broad stairways, the lofty ceilings, the bustle and rush of the numbers of girls that thronged the halls filled her with amazement. Would she ever get used to this great place? If she left her room would she ever be able to find her way back? Would she ever fly up and down the stairs and feel as much at home as some of these other girls appeared to do? Would she ever be able to laugh as they did, or would she always be aching with suppressed tears? Would she ever feel so well acquainted with this very pretty and very stylish roommate that she could sit down and talk with her as she would with Jane? Oh, she wished she were at home. She wished her roommate would go away so she could take a good hearty cry.

With such thoughts as these her mind was filled as she tried to return intelligible answers to the coldly polite remarks of the girl who was her companion. Both were much relieved when the sound of the supper bell interrupted their feeble conversation, and they joined

the chattering throng that swept down the broad stairways to the large and brightly lighted dining-room.

Thus night found the two widely separated sisters, the one in the basement of the humble log cabin in the backwoods, the other in the spacious dining-room of a great college; yet the heart of the one was with the heart of the other, and each was assured of the other's loneliness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A BIT OF STUDENT LIFE.

"I TELL you, Claire, it is perfectly awful. I am sure I do not see how I can ever exist. Miss Lawrence is just as mean as she can be. It was bad enough in her not to let us room together this term, after we had promised so faithfully that we would keep the rules better. When she gave me my choice between rooming with Mollie Lane or taking a new girl, of course I said the new girl, because I thought nobody could be any worse than Mollie. But, oh dear! oh dear! I wish I had chosen Mollie," and Ethel Evans covered her face with her handkerchief, and sobbed passionately. Claire Warren wept sympathetically, and the two pretty and stylish girls presented a doleful picture as they walked down the college drive.

"Is she so very, very bad?" asked Claire, presently.

"Just dreadful!" cried Ethel. "She's straight from the backwoods, and doesn't know the first thing. I don't see how she ever got loose, or how she happened to find

her way here of all places. And she has the horriest things! Did you see that yellow-striped brown calico that she wore down to breakfast? And just think I had to put my arm round her and walk down to meals like the other girls. I felt like a guy all the time."

"Maybe she won't dress so bad always," suggested Claire, comfortingly.

"Oh yes, she will. She unpacked her trunk this morning and hung her dresses in the closet. You just ought to see them. There's a cheap brilliantine that's made a century out of date, and that shabby blue cashmere she wore when she came, and three or four countrified calicos, and that's all."

"Mercy!" ejaculated Claire.

"And she has nothing but those ancient linen collars, and I don't believe she'd know what a cuff was if she saw one," continued Ethel, angrily. A new thought disturbed Claire's mind.

"Whatever will our set do? We can't take such a creature into it, and she'll be forever in the way. She may be a regular little tattletale, and get us into no end of trouble."

"We'll freeze her out, you may depend upon it. The girls will make themselves so uncomfortably superior that she'll be glad to keep

herself out of the way. But I haven't told you the worst of it. I found out this morning that she is going to work for her board and tuition! Just think of it! Colonel Evans' daughter rooming with a backwoods pauper! Don't that sound nice?" Claire stared at her aghast.

"Truly?"

"Truly. I don't see how I can stand it," and again Ethel gave way to a flood of tears.

The two girls were out for their morning exercise, and were presently joined by others of their chosen friends. They belonged to what was considered "the fast set" of the school, the members of which were noted for their dilatoriness in study and their disregard for rule. The term previous Ethel and Claire had been roommates, and their room had been headquarters for the outbreking set. The president determined to put a stop to the trouble, so at the beginning of this new year had separated the girls as widely as the limits of the building would permit. No two of them were anywhere near together, and all of them were placed with roommates whom the president thought would refuse to disobey the rules of the school. It had been Katie Carter's unhappy lot to be placed with the ring-leader of the mutinous crowd, and upon her innocent

head the wrath of the haughty Miss Evans was poured.

Now they all met in the spacious grounds, and condoled with one another on their unhappy fate. None of them had fared quite so badly as Ethel, in their estimation, and they heaped their pity upon her till she felt fairly comforted.

"I'd write to papa and get him to make Miss Lawrence change my roommate, if I thought it would do any good, but I'm sure it wouldn't. So there's nothing left for me to do only to make the best of it, till the nine weeks are over and everybody changes rooms. We must try and keep the rules as well as we can, girls, and pull the wool over Miss Lawrence's eyes. If she thinks we've reformed, maybe she'll change things about to suit us better." They all agreed to this. Then they turned to more congenial subjects, and the poor little "backwoods pauper" was forgotten for the time being.

Katie was quite as much dismayed over the situation as Ethel was. Ethel's fair blonde beauty made her more conscious of her "red hair and freckled face." The young patrician's snowy hands and graceful movements bespoke a social rank far different from that to which the awkward, sun-brown-handed little plebeian

belonged. Ethel's dainty cashmere and soft laces made poor Katie continually conscious of the "yellow-striped brown calico, stiff collar and clumsy shoes" that she was obliged to wear. The elegance of the black brilliantine faded into insignificance when it appeared beside Ethel's shimmering summer-silk.

But worse than this was the cold unfriendliness that surrounded her every moment which she was compelled to spend in Ethel's society. The girl would have nothing to do with her, and made her feel that her very presence was an imposition. Her shy attempts to make friends were met by silence or cool reserve. Poor Katie felt as if her heart would break. There was no one to whom she could turn. Home was hopelessly far away. There was nothing for her but to plunge deeply into her studies, and in them forget her loneliness and her humiliation.

To the credit of some of the girls of Ethel's "set" be it said that their hearts were touched by the evident sorrow of the newcomer, and they strove to be friendly with her, and to coax Ethel into a better frame of mind toward her.

"Oh she's a harmless enough little idiot," the angry girl replied. "She manages to keep out of my way pretty well, and you may be sure I

give her a wide berth. I guess I can endure her till change of rooms."

"There's not much 'idiot' about her, Ethel E. Evans, as you would have found out if you had taken the pains to see where she stands in her studies. She's two classes ahead of you in Latin, and in the rapid-class in algebra. She took out all the preps. and several other studies. She has brains if she hasn't good clothes, and I'd advise you to thaw out a little and get her to help you on some of those fables that make you weep, and give you a lift in your problems. You'd better appreciate your blessings while you have them, and seize the chance to make some grades that will win Miss Lawrence's approval," said the girl who had first spoken.

"Are you fibbing, Maude Morris?" demanded Ethel.

"Not a bit, Miss Evans. Ask Anna Walker if my word does not pass at par."

Anna confirmed Maude's statements and Ethel's face was the picture of blank amazement. She was inclined to be more angry than ever at the very idea that her despised roommate had surpassed her in scholastic rank, but she wisely concluded to swallow her wrath since there was much for her to gain by the opposite course.

From that day Katie was surprised by the

gradual thawing of Ethel's cold manner toward herself. She was so grateful, so eager to win the friendship of her roommate, so relieved over the improvement in affairs that she did not stop to inquire into the cause of the unexpected change. She was delighted to be able to help Ethel with her hard sentences and knotty problems, and little realized how the selfish girl was only using her brains for her own advancement, while concealing her dislike under the mask of a pretended friendship. It mattered not to simple little Katie. Her heart expanded, her spirits rose, and college life at once became quite endurable. Her happiness overflowed in her letters to Jane, and relieved the sorrow and indignation which the elder sister had felt over the treatment that Katie had received.

Meanwhile Katie was learning many other things that made her life much happier. She found that with the majority of the students brains counted for much more than dress. She soon saw that Ethel and her set were looked down upon by the more advanced girls. She discovered that to be "Only a prep." overbalanced the advantages of beauty and style. More than that her own position as one who was working her way did not prove a detriment to her in the eyes of most of the students.

They admired her ambition and pluck in thus striving against all odds for the education which "the fast set" failed to appreciate, and set her above them in their estimation.

The change of rooms came as a welcome relief, and brought with it a pleasant-faced senior, who proved just the friend that Katie needed. Removed from her uncongenial surroundings, her whole nature seemed to expand and improve. Her new roommate took pleasure in teaching her the customs of the school, in advising her in regard to dress and manners, in helping her through the hard places in her lessons. Under Ada Morton's gentle tuition Katie's backward manners and uncouth ways rapidly disappeared. During the remainder of the year these two roomed together and the friendship between them became very strong and sincere.

After the Christmas vacation Ethel Evans did not return to the college, and it was whispered around among the girls that Miss Lawrence had quietly told her that her presence was detrimental to the peace of the school and therefore no longer desired. Beauty, style and social rank availed nothing for Ethel Evans, since they were accompanied by a selfish and ungovernable spirit. It was not long that she was either mourned or

missed by her former associates. She had done nothing to impress any of them with either affection or respect for herself. She had been but a negative character, and when "nothing" is taken away from a quantity it does not even leave a vacuum behind it.

Deprived of their leader, and warned by her fate, the remainder of the fast set dropped their wild pranks and settled down to more earnest study.

The remainder of the school year passed uneventfully for Katie. There was an earnest round of study and work and a corresponding growth of body and mind and soul. By her bright spirit, her faithfulness and her genuine worth, she won the love and respect of students and teachers, and made her life in her new home very happy. Ada Morton's beneficent influence over her roommate was not confined to mere mental and outward improvement. She was a true Christian, and under her tuition Katie learned much of the "wisdom from above." Altogether, this first year, which began in discouragement and trial and loneliness, proved a year of great success to the young backwoods student, and ended in light and cheer.

At Christmas time a great surprise had come in the shape of a beautiful letter of cousinly

congratulation and well-wishing from Bessie Carter, and in it was a check for \$25 as a Christmas present from the far-away cousin. Katie shed tears of thankfulness over this letter, not so much on account of the unexpected financial help, as because of the warm sympathy which was wrapped within it. The money was carefully put away to swell the meagre amount which remained toward the expense of another year.

Katie little realized how many pleasures and pretty articles of dress Bessie had denied herself that she might have the privilege of sending this money to help her ambitious cousin, but she felt the love that prompted it, and understood that this love itself was prompted by the spirit of the Master which bids, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

CHAPTER XIX.

IMPROVED OPPORTUNITIES.

As commencement days drew near Katie's mind was sorely troubled by the question of what she was to do when school closed. By the most rigid economy, aided by Bessie's check, she still had nearly one hundred dollars. It was positively necessary for her to obtain something to do through the summer that would not only pay her board, but add a little to her purse for the next school year. In her perplexity she went to Miss Lawrence for counsel, and here she met with sympathy and encouragement.

The president's first help was given in the assurance that Katie might enter the next year on the same terms that she then had. She also promised that work and working-hours should be so lessened and arranged as to interfere as little as possible with the time demanded for more advanced studies.

"I think that it will be quite possible for you to obtain work of some kind in town, so that you can remain here through the summer

and save the expense of travelling to and from your home. Are you particular as to the kind of work you get?" the lady asked, with a little smile.

"No, only so it is good, honest work," Katie answered. "I am used to hard work and am not afraid of it."

"Would you be willing to work in somebody's kitchen?" Miss Lawrence asked.

"Why not?" responded Katie, promptly. "I work in the kitchen here, and I worked in the kitchen at home. Would it be out of the way to work in some other kitchen?"

"Not at all," replied Miss Lawrence, warmly. "Still, many girls would not look at it in that way. They have a horror of kitchen work, and consider that a girl is disgraced by having it to do. I am glad that you are so sensible. It makes it a pleasure rather than a task for me to try to help you. It is very annoying to attempt to assist those who are hard to please, and cranky about the kind of work that is offered them. One seldom cares to help such people more than once. But since you are willing to do any good, honest work, I feel sure that I will have no trouble in finding a place for you somewhere near here."

With many thanks Katie left the president's

office, and returned to her room with a lightened heart.

"She may not be able to find a place for me, and I may have to give up the hope of staying another year, but I shall not worry over it.

"Just now, I must put my whole mind on my reviews so that I can pass my examinations well. If I cannot get a place I can go home and teach school again next winter, and come back the year after. I will not take any of Jane's money, for they need it all at home. I can manage some way and I will."

This was Katie's determination, and she worked and studied as calmly and cheerily during those last days as though she were sure of the opportunities desired. It was not until two days before commencement that Miss Lawrence sent for her. With beating heart Katie hurried down to the office, wondering much in regard to the position that was probably to be offered her. Miss Lawrence met her with smiling face.

"Did you think that I had forgotten you, my dear?"

"Oh no, indeed," Katie answered. "I knew that you were very busy and would have but little time to spare for me. I did not know

whether you would even have time to think of me before commencement."

"But I have thought and spoken too. I have a dear friend up town who is an invalid, and who has been confined to her chair for years. She is quite helpless, and needs a great deal of attention. She has a negro nurse who has been with her for years, and who does the heaviest part of lifting and caring for her, but she needs some one else to be more of a companion for her, some one to read to her and write for her, and to be with her when her nurse must be absent. The young lady who has been with her for two years past has been called away by the death of her mother, so that Mrs. Porter has only the old nurse with her now. I called to see her yesterday, and she told me of her loss, and asked if there were not some young lady in the college who could come to her for the summer. I told her about you, and she said at once that she thought you might suit her, and asked me to bring you to see her. I am going up town this afternoon as soon as general exercises are over, and if you think you would like the place you may go with me to call on Mrs. Porter. I am sure you cannot help but like her. As for the place, your duties would be confining, but they would not be heavy. You could earn

your board, and what wages you received could mostly be saved to help you next year."

Of course Katie did not hesitate a moment in saying that she would like to make the call. So the arrangement was completed.

Late in the afternoon the college carriage drew up before a large, old-fashioned residence on one of the quiet streets of the town. Katie had hardly time to note the beauty of the well-kept lawn before they were received into the house, and ushered into Mrs. Porter's presence.

This lady proved to be a sweet faced, snowy haired woman whose soft voice told of patience, even while the lines on her face bore evidence to the frequent presence of extreme pain. She was seated in an invalid's rolling chair, and Katie quickly saw how very helpless she was. Her welcome was so cordial and her face so attractive that the young girl's heart was drawn to her at once, and she felt that it would be a pleasure to serve such a woman as this.

There was some ordinary friendly chat between Miss Lawrence and her friend in regard to the stirring preparations for the coming commencement and its attendant duties and pleasures. While this was going on Katie had time to look about her and form some idea of what life would be if spent mostly in this big,

sunny, airy room, which bore evidence of the wealth and culture of its mistress.

"I expect I would get very tired sometimes and find it very confining: but then the potato patch at home was tiresome and confining too, and the school teaching also. This surely would be pleasanter than either of them."

She had no time for further thought as Mrs. Porter turned to her and said:

"My dear, Miss Lawrence tells me that you are an uncommon sort of young lady, inasmuch as you are anxious for any sort of work. So I told her to bring you around that I might have the privilege of seeing so sensible a girl. Do you think you could stand it to come and share my prison and help me to endure my confinement and my pain? I warn you that I am entirely helpless, and sometimes I am nervous—yes, and cross. And I have to be waited on almost constantly. I cannot even draw down the shade if the sun shines into my eyes, nor pick up my handkerchief if I am so careless as to drop it. Do you think you could stand it to live in this room all summer and not run about as most young girls do?"

"If you can stand it for years and bear the pain as well, it surely ought not to be hard for me to do it for one summer," Katie answered.

"Yet many do think it too burdensome to

endure. Of course you would have some time given you for rest and recreation when my nurse, Hannah, is with me. You could have your books here and go on with your studies when I did not need your help; but you would have to be here all the time while Hannah was busy at other things, as I cannot be left alone many minutes at a time. Do you think you could agree to do this?"

"Yes," Katie replied. "I am willing to try, and I will do my best to please you."

A long conversation followed, in which the questions of wages, recreation hours and similar things were settled. It was agreed that the arrangement was to be tried for a week, and at the end of that time, if either party was dissatisfied, the compact was to be set aside. Katie was to enter upon her duties the day after commencement, as Hannah was alone in charge, and needed the relief that her assistance would bring.

A long letter was written to Jane that night, telling of the good fortune of her sister in obtaining so good a home for the summer.

"I expect to get very tired, and I have no doubt that sometimes I will wish myself out of the place, but then that can be said of any work. I am thankful that I have found a place where I can earn my board and save

what wages I get. Just think. I will have three dollars a week for twelve weeks, and that will make quite enough, with what money I have, to take me through next year. Miss Lawrence says I will be able to study a good deal, and can perhaps prepare myself for examination in several branches so as to take them out of the course. That will be a great help, as I will then not have to crowd my studies so much when here.

“You may be sure I will do my best to please Mrs. Porter, and not to disappoint Miss Lawrence who has recommended me to her.

“I wish I could come home and see you all, and be with you in your work this summer; but we cannot spare the money it would cost. I want to hurry all I can and make the time here as short as possible, so that I can be ready to lighten your work. There is not a day but I remember that, but for your unselfishness, I could not be enjoying all the advantages that surround me; and for your sake, Janie dear I am trying to make the most of them.

“I will write to you as soon as I can after I reach my new home, and tell you all about the examinations and commencement, and how I like my place and everything else that would interest you. Do not worry if my letter is

delayed, for I expect it will take several days to get fairly settled at my new duties."

Commencement in itself was an education to this young girl. The gathering of cultured guests, the decorations, the music, the fine addresses, the many little extra arrangements, all were subjects of intense interest to her.

Then there were the final instructions which were given to the girls by the careful president, in regard to the management of tickets, checks and baggage, and, most of all, concerning the proper manners to observe by the way and what should be done in case of accident or delays. Although Katie had no immediate need for these instructions she stored them away in her memory, and they served her in good stead when her time to travel came.

Then came the whirl and excitement of Commencement Day, which closed in a torrent of tears and farewells as most of the students departed for their homes. Night settled down over an almost deserted college.

Katie's heart sank as she thought of the change the morrow was to bring. There is always a shrinking from a change that leads into an untried life, even though it is of our own choosing and though we hope to receive only good therefrom. So it was with Katie. She feared failure, even while she hoped for

success. The work before her was all strange. She had never had anything to do with sickness or pain, and now she was going to abide in their constant presence.

She was troubling herself with such forebodings, when suddenly she thought:

“How very foolish I am to worry over imaginary trials. Perhaps I will find my summer’s work both pleasant and profitable. If it is not, there is no sense in my bearing the trial twice—once now in imagination and again after awhile in reality. Really I wonder what has become of my common sense. Perhaps I had better go to sleep and let my brain accumulate a better supply than it appears to have to-night.”

CHAPTER XX.

THE CURRICULUM OF SUFFERING.

As days passed on Katie became accustomed to her new home and work, and found both far pleasanter than she had anticipated.

Mrs. Porter was a childless widow, a woman of high culture and deep Christian character. No one could spend even a few moments in her presence without being impressed by the saintliness of her patient, cheerful face, and the sweet earnestness of her voice. Her sufferings at times were intense, and her helplessness at all times was absolute; but only the snowy hair and the deep lines marked upon her face spoke of the hours of anguish which she endured.

"I suffer enough without having to talk of it," she sometimes said. "It is hard enough to bear at the time without living it over again in memory. So I try to forget it all when I feel easy, and to enjoy the happiness of each restful moment as it comes to me."

Unless Mrs. Porter was suffering from one of her severe attacks of pain Katie's services

were not required at night, as old Hannah slept on a cot in the little room opening into the one occupied by her mistress, and was ready to answer her faintest call. So Katie occupied the prettiest room she had ever called her own, and found it fitted up with every dainty toilet accessory.

Mrs. Porter possessed abundant means, and her whole house was furnished in a model style. It was surrounded by spacious grounds which were kept in the most approved fashion, and many hours of the summer were spent by Katie in pushing Mrs. Porter's wheeled chair along the gravel walks or sitting beside that lady in some shady spot and reading to her. These little visits to the outside world were the good lady's only "outing," and were much enjoyed both by her and her young companion. Other hours were spent in the library or the handsome parlors at times when the cessation of pain made visitors welcome. But most of the time was spent in the sunny sitting-room or in the darkened bedroom, where the poor patient form was racked with agony and death seemed the only desirable thing. It was during these trying hours that Katie learned the most valuable of the lessons which came to her that summer. The blessedness of the "life which is hid with Christ in God,"

was gloriously revealed in the darkened hours of suffering, and the joyful looking forward to death as only an "entering into rest" robbed death itself of its terrors. The sweet accepting of pain and helplessness and inactivity as "the best thing" ordained by a wise Father, and the thankfulness for the blessings that remained, proved the satisfactoriness of trusting in the Lord.

"It seems to me that, no matter what comes to me in life, I can never again complain," Katie wrote in one of her letters to Jane. "I never was able to realize the blessing of a healthy, vigorous body until now. I never appreciated how beautiful the world was until I was shut into this sick-room, with only a glimpse now and then into the freedom and sweetness of the outside. I always felt as if God had given me nothing; but here is Mrs. Porter, with every advantage of wealth, culture and social position, and yet she would give them all for such blessings as are mine. Just think of it! I never dreamed that any one could envy me. Yet if I were called upon to choose between Mrs. Porter's possessions and mine, I would not hesitate a second in replying, 'I will keep my own.'

"I believe one reason why the Lord sent me here was to teach me this lesson of being 'con-

tent with such things as I have.' But this is not the best thing I have learned. Mrs. Porter's wealth surrounds her with bodily comforts, and furnishes her the means of allaying suffering; but her Christian faith upholds her in her hours of most intense pain and robs death of all terror. I can never have such earthly wealth as hers, but thank God such faith is possible for even me, and I have learned to place it above everything else."

Mrs. Porter took great interest in the young girl who had come to be her companion, and by gentle questioning soon learned the whole story of the backwoods home and of the two girls whose ambitions had reached out after the wisdom of the outside world. She learned all about the self-denials both were exercising that Katie might win the coveted education, and her kindly heart went out to spirits so in accord with her own early ambitions. She gave Katie much good advice in regard to her student work, and helped her greatly in the studies she was pursuing in her leisure hours. The course of reading which they followed was varied to suit the young student, and Mrs. Porter's intelligent explanations and comments made fiction, biography, religion and science, alike pleasing and instructive.

It is not to be supposed that Katie's summer was one of unqualified pleasure. There were days and nights when constant, active service was required in caring for her suffering mistress. There were long days when the wooing beauty of the outside world made confinement in the sick-room almost unbearable, and times when the fresh young spirit pined for the freedom of its native woods and wild, active life. Sometimes she felt as if she hated books and study, and wished she could get away from the constant presence of Mrs. Porter and Hannah and see some of "the girls" once more. She longed for young companionship and gay animal spirits, and chafed at even the advantages that surrounded her. For Katie Carter was only human and possessed the desires of a young girl. So, in spite of her attractive surroundings and comfortable home, the weeks of that summer vacation slipped slowly by and September seemed to linger uncommonly.

As the time drew near for Katie's return to her college work Mrs. Porter's kindness was shown in other ways. One morning, when she was feeling uncommonly well, she had Hannah and Katie bring down a trunk from one of the upper rooms, and at her direction Katie spread all its contents before her.

It was filled with beautiful garments of fine

materials and old-fashioned make, and the lady fingered many of them lovingly as one by one Katie placed them in her lap.

"These are the things I wore when I was a young woman and in the vigor of health," she said. "This dress was made to wear on a trip to the Thousand Isles, and here is one that went on a delightful excursion down the Ohio River. Here was a favorite street dress, and this was my most becoming evening toilet. In that box in the bottom you will find my graduating dress. Take it out and let me see it once more."

Katie opened the box and shook out the folds of the soft white silk that was now creamy with age.

"Ah," the lady sighed, while tears slipped over her cheeks, "how proud I was of that dress, and how happy was the day when I first wore it, for I took the valedictory of my class. I little thought then that the day would come when I would be a helpless old woman, confined to a wheeled-chair and unable even to unroll the precious diploma that I received that day so joyfully. Ah, well, the Lord knows best. And I have no doubt that this chair and this pain are only part of the curriculum that leads to the heavenly diploma."

There were a few moments of sad silence

while Katie refolded the handsome dress and replaced it in its box. The sight of the dresses had brought up memories of so many free, happy hours that the invalid found it hard to control the feelings that swept over her.

It was only for a little while. Then the sweet, patient spirit gained control, and the lady said :

“Now, my dear, I will tell you why I have had you bring these things here. There is no use in their lying away in that trunk year after year, when they might be doing good to some one. I can never use them again myself, yet they are good and handsome and capable of much service. So I want you to have them to wear while you are at school. There are enough of them to supply you nicely during the remainder of your course, and I will be glad to know that they are being of use again. If you are willing to accept them I will send for Madame Gilbert, and have several of them made over in present style for your immediate use. The rest can wait till times of future need, and the white silk and slippers may see you receive your diploma—and I hope they will grace another valedictory,” she ended, with a smile.

“Indeed ! indeed ! Mrs. Porter, you are too kind,” Katie cried, while tears rained over

her cheeks. "I do not like to take your beautiful things, when I feel that I have done nothing to deserve them."

"What shall I do with them then?" queried the lady, with an amused smile. "Shall I lock them away again, only to be a useless care for years to come, or shall I give them to Hannah? Can you imagine one of them made large enough to fit her portly figure? And what use has she for a graduation dress?"

Katie laughed in spite of her tears. The fleshy old negress and the creamy, dainty silk were so incongruous that the very idea of connecting the two was ludicrous. Mrs. Porter laughed also.

"You see, Katie, you are the only one who could receive any benefit from them. I feel that it would be wrong for me to store away, for moths to eat, these things that might help you to make a noble and cultured woman of yourself. I will be glad to see you wear them, and I will try to imagine that in you I see my own ambitious, youthful self. It will be a real pleasure to give them to you. Do not deny me, my dear."

There could be but one answer; and as Katie folded away the beautiful dresses she found it hard to realize that all these treasures were hers, that when she returned to

school the girls would have no cause to laugh at her poor wardrobe and "out-of-the-world styles." The joy of being as well-dressed as her companions, which is so dear to every girl's heart, was intensified in Katie's case, since her former mortification had been so deep.

The remaining days of her vacation were filled with eager preparations. Under the skilled hands of Madame Gilbert several nice and serviceable costumes were made, and, through Mrs. Porter's liberality, other garments to correspond were furnished. Mrs. Porter surveyed the change in Katie's outward appearance with unconcealed satisfaction.

"It is all very foolish and unnecessary for schoolgirls to rate their fellow-students by the clothes they wear, yet a large proportion of them are guilty of that very thing. It is all wrong, and shows lack of wisdom. Still, schoolgirls alone are not to be condemned. It is a trait that is common to a large share of the world beside, that share which counts more on veneer and polish than on genuine worth. It is not really worthy of one's notice, yet it makes one uncomfortable and is often a serious hindrance in one's work. I am glad that I have been able to remove this unpleasant drawback from your course, and to free

you from this extra care and expense. Now, if you want to pay me for it, make such good grades in your classes and win such a place in the school this year as to make me proud of my girl."

"I will do my best," Katie answered, humbly and gratefully. "If I fail to attain what you desire it will not be from lack of effort, but merely from lack of ability. I cannot make more brains, but I will try to make the best use of those I have. Your kindness will be a great help and comfort to me, and if at any time I get discouraged and faint-hearted a glance at my dress will remind me of your ambition for me and spur me onward."

It was with real regret on both sides that Katie left Mrs. Porter and returned to her college duties. Even old Hannah sighed over her departure and said:

"Whatevah will we do wif'out her? She seems like she so'ter belongs hyah, an' the house'll seem lonesome when she ain't in it."

CHAPTER XXI.

WHAT IS HAPPINESS ?

IT was a rainy afternoon in Kansas. The wind had been blowing furiously from the south all the morning, filling the air with flying sand and dust, sweeping the dry leaves and weeds into the hedges, howling through the budding branches of the cottonwood trees, jerking the wheels of the windmills this way and that, making the spring day as unpleasant as possible for man and beast and every living thing. Up and down the long furrows of the cornfields the patient men and patient horses had toiled ceaselessly in spite of the disagreeable gale. The horses had bent their heads to the blast and plodded along. The men had pulled their hats low over their faces in the vain attempt to keep the sand out of their eyes.

The air was thick and the sky obscured by the flying sand. The afternoon had opened as disagreeably as the morning, but gradually had come a falling of the wind and finally a complete lull, which allowed the dust to settle sufficiently to reveal the heavy bank of clouds

rolling up in the northwest and promising relief from the dust and drouth. There was a distant muttering of thunder, then suddenly the wind began blowing furiously from the northwest, and the clouds came flying up over the sky. "The wind had got into the cloud," and the rain was close behind it.

Men hastened to unhitch their teams and plows, listers, harrows and planters were left in the fields, while man and beast hastened to find shelter, which they reached none too soon, for the rain came with a dash that equalled the fury of the wind.

The men on Mr. William Carter's place had hurried to the shelter of one of the great barns, which they reached just as the rain began to fall.

"That was a close shave," exclaimed Tom Parker, who was the last one to run his team through the great doorway. "Just see it pour. When it rains in Kansas, it rains—none of your polite down-east showers, or soft drizzles, but a regular flood of water that would last New England for a whole season."

"Kansas never does anything by halves," answered Jerry Wilson, who was sitting on an upturned half-bushel measure, and digging the sand from his eyes with what he called an "ecru-colored" handkerchief. "If I could

just save the sand I swallow every spring, I'd soon have a half-section of my own. Don't my eyes look bright? They've been well scoured this morning."

The rest laughed, for his eyes were blood-shot and so full of dust that he could hardly open them.

"You may as well unharness your horses, boys," said Tom. "There'll be no more field work this afternoon. The furrows are running with water already, and the ground will be too sticky to plow. They say in Kansas that it 'only rains at night or on Sundays, so that the hired men won't get any rest,' but this is one time when the hired men are ahead; so let's enjoy it."

The horses were speedily put away, then the men went up into the hay-loft and threw themselves upon the soft hay to rest. With deep satisfaction they lay there in their comfortable shelter, watched the rain pour down outside, heard it dash upon the roof and drip from the eaves, listened to the coo of the pigeons in the dove-cote outside and the crunching of the horses' teeth as they gathered up the grains of corn that remained in their feed-boxes.

"This is fine," exclaimed Lon Evans. "I wish it would rain every afternoon."

The rest of the men laughed.

"You'd be the first fellow to cry for sunshine and dry weather," retorted Jerry. "You'd be growling because you'd have to get out your rubber boots and wade around in mud knee deep, and you'd be emigrating to the deserts of Arizona before a month was out."

"Maybe I would," answered Lon, good-humoredly. "I suppose it's human nature not to appreciate what one has. I wonder if there is any place on earth which contains all the elements of happiness."

"What is happiness?" asked Tom.

"To go where one pleases, to do what one chooses and to have what one wants," answered Bob Ellis.

"If a fellow had all the money he wanted, he'd soon be able to have all three," remarked Will Carter.

"Can you buy happiness?" asked Frank Sanders. "If so, why is it that the rich are so seldom happy?"

"Your question is too wide, Tom," said Lon. "There can be as many answers to it as there are people in the world; for each one finds happiness in his own way, and what pleases one would not satisfy another. Now, for instance, take Frank and me. I like a full pipe,

a glass of beer, a deck of cards and a few jolly boys for company. That's what I call a rousing good time. But Frank would rather have a Bible, a prayer-meeting, a lot of heathen on a foreign shore and the chance of ending up in some cannibal stew-pot! Now, which is happiness? I'd be miserable if I were he, and he'd be miserable if he were I. How are you going to strike a balance, and wouldn't a 'balance' be misery for both of us?"

The men laughed, but Tom was not cornered.

"Your answer is too wide," he replied.

"Simmer it all down, and tell me what it is that makes you happy with cards and beer, and makes Frank happy with a Bible and a prayer-meeting. There are lots of things that we say produce happiness, but what is happiness itself?"

A silence fell over the group as each tried to analyze the feeling that he called happiness, and tell just wherein it lay.

Presently Jerry said, "I'd say it meant no remorse for the past, no fear for the future, and making the best of what a fellow has now."

"It is pleasure without pain," said a man who had not previously spoken.

"Is that possible?" asked Tom.

"I don't know. You're getting in too deep

for us, Tom," replied Lon. "Give us your opinion, Frank. I'll wager you'll say religion is happiness."

Frank did not answer for a moment; then he said slowly, "The nearest that I can come to it is to say that happiness is soul satisfaction. One may satisfy the cravings of body and mind, and yet not be happy; but if the soul—the governing principle of a man—is satisfied he will be happy, no matter what else he lacks. One man thinks to find happiness in wealth; another, in wisdom; a third, in pleasure; a fourth, in the fulfillment of all desires, while still another thinks that perfect health would bring perfect happiness. Did you never stop to think that the religion of Jesus Christ offers all of these things? It is the fullness of wisdom, the wealth of the spirit, the health of the soul, the fulfillment of desire. It holds pleasure without pain, hope without fear, joy without sorrow, and complete satisfaction at last. Yes, Lon, I say that in true religion is true happiness." There was silence again for a time, then Lon said, uneasily:

"Didn't I tell you that's what he'd say, boys? That was a very nice little sermon, Frank, and I don't see as you need to take the rest of your college course before starting out

as a preacher. Being as you've been honest, I will be too, and own up that cards and beer and a 'jolly time' may seem the height of pleasure for the time, but there is no satisfaction in them after all, and down in the bottom of his heart a fellow isn't really happy even at the time. I'll own my way ain't the best way, still I don't see as I could enjoy your way, even though I know it's right."

"That is because you have never tried it," Frank returned, promptly. "If once you choose to follow it, you would find increasing happiness, and that without end. Can that be said of any other road to happiness?"

"No," said Jerry. "There is always an end, and there is always some drawback that keeps you company by the way. I guess, boys, Frank is about right."

There the subject ended, so far as conversation was concerned, but the mind of each man in that hay-loft went on with the discussion. Each one was asking himself whether he were really happy, and whether the goal for which he was striving would prove all that he desired when at last it was reached. Each acknowledged to himself that happiness was only comparative, and that its perfection could not be obtained in this life, and that thought carried them forward to a consideration of the pros-

pects of the life beyond. It was a strong sermon that they had all united in preaching there in the hay-loft that rainy afternoon.

It was a sermon that set Will Carter to thinking. Thus far in life his one ambition had been the acquiring of wealth. He had thought that to own a fine farm, well improved and well stocked, with a good-sized bank account, would be the sum total of happiness. For the first time he questioned the thought. Did wealth bring happiness alone, and did it not also bring toil and care? Would he ever come to the point when he could say that he had enough? His uncle had not, and although he owned several fine farms and much stock, and much money in bank, he still worked and worried and saved as anxiously as ever. Will thought of the money he had already saved. Had it done him any good? He had used only what he was obliged to have, and the rest had been invested, "turned over" and re-invested until it had grown surprisingly. He tried to think of some particular happiness that had come to him through it, but could find none except the pleasure of accumulating more and more.

Along with the thought of his money crept a guilty feeling that he had not done the right thing by his mother and sisters. He told him-

self that he intended all his earnings for them ; but conscience whispered, "If it is all to be theirs, why not give some of it to them now ? How do you know that they will live to enjoy it at some distant future time when you are willing to say that you have enough ? What assurance have you that they are not really suffering for your help now ? You know by experience how hard it used to be to make a bare living on that poor little farm. And they are only girls. Then, how much harder the work must be for them than it was for you and your father." They were unpleasant thoughts, and he could not shake them off. He was glad when the rain ceased and Tom said, "Come on, boys. The rain is over and we may as well do up the chores. Mrs. Carter is sure to have supper early to-night since she knows we are all in from the field, and there is no work to hinder us from coming in any time."

The men scattered at once to their various tasks of feeding and caring for the stock, and it was not long until the bell announced that Tom had been right and that supper was ready.

Will lingered in the supper-room to talk with Bessie after the rest had gone out.

"Bessie, what is happiness ?" he asked, abruptly.

"What a queer question," Bessie exclaimed. "I don't know that I can answer it. Do you mean to ask what would make me happy, or what is necessary before any one can be happy?"

"I want a rule for all cases."

The girl studied earnestly for awhile.

"It seems to me," she said, slowly, "one would need to have a clear conscience and be sure he was doing just the right thing. One can't do a doubtful thing and feel really easy in doing it, but if he knows he is right then there is happiness in doing even what other people call hard and unpleasant things. In my opinion, rightfulness is the main element of happiness. I suppose a learned man would laugh at that definition, but I can only speak so far as I know."

"You and Frank think very much alike," Will remarked.

"That is because Frank and I stand upon the same foundation, and look from the same point of view. I wish you stood with us, Will."

Will made no sort of an answer to that appeal, and was glad that the entrance of others put an end to the conversation.

He went away to his own room and studied long and earnestly. He fought a battle with

himself that was really the turning-point in his history. At its close he went hastily to work and wrote a short note to Jane, enclosed in it a check for fifty dollars and carried it to his uncle, saying, "Here is a letter I wish you would mail when you go to town in the morning."

Then he turned and went out under the stars, and lo! he found that in that first self-denial he had entered the path of rightfulness and it was indeed the way of happiness. So the question was answered for him.

CHAPTER XXII.

BACKWOODS PLEASURES.

THE days of that first winter of Katie's absence from home passed very slowly for Jane. For the third time she "had the school" in District No. 12, and as the attendance had increased her wages had been raised to forty-five dollars a month. This amount seemed like a little fortune to the family, and Susie grumbled loudly because Jane was as saving as ever, and refused to spend the extra wages for extra things.

"I'm sure I don't see why you have to be so stingy," she cried. "There are lots of things in the stores down to the Landing that I want, and I think you might let me have them. Here I have to stay at home and milk and churn and slave around, just to let you make money to store away, and to give Katie the chance to act the fine lady and lay around and do nothing. And I say it ain't fair."

"But Susie," Jane remonstrated, "you know I don't save my wages to use for myself. It is only wise that we keep a little ahead if pos-

sible. Suppose one of us should get sick; there would be a doctor's bill to pay. Suppose I should get sick. What would you have to live on till I got well? As for Katie, it isn't right for you to speak so. She is working hard to fit herself for a good position. If she has a good education she can draw a fine salary, and that will more than make up for what she spends now. The teachers at the Landing get sixty and seventy-five dollars a month. Those at Vernon do as well. Don't you see how much better that is than forty or forty-five? I want Katie to go clear through the course, if possible. She will need help next fall, and I must save what I can to help her through. Don't we live as well as we ever did?"

"Oh yes, I guess so," was the discontented reply. "It isn't things to eat that I was talking about. Moll Dalton got a new wool dress last week and she has a velvet cap with a red feather, and she puts on awful airs. I'm just as good as she is, and I think I might have things as good as hers."

"But Moll earned what she has," Jane suggested. "She worked out all summer."

"I don't care if she did," retorted Susie. "I worked all summer, too, but nobody seems to think I deserve anything for it." Jane saw

that further argument would be useless. Susie would not be made to see that her own idleness deprived her of many things which otherwise she might have had. There was no reason why she could not earn something for herself. She was sixteen years old, and large and stout for her age. She was not really needed at home, for her mother was able to do the housework and Jane hired a boy to do the field work.

But Susie would not do anything to help herself. She could not teach, for she had persistently refused to go to school. She would not go to "work out," because as somebody's kitchen girl she would be obliged to work whether she felt like it or not. So she idled about home, or ran about visiting the girls of the neighborhood, and found her pleasure in consulting only her own feelings and desires. She considered herself a young lady, and quite old enough to "have beaux" and go to all the merry-makings in the vicinity.

It was on this account that Mollie Dalton's new dress and cap aroused her envy and jealousy, for Mollie was Susie's rival in their social circle and had several times received attentions from young fellows who were Susie's especial favorites. Susie, in her plain calico and black straw hat, felt herself no match for

Mollie in her flashy finery, and therefore she mourned her unhappy fate and grumbled over Jane's "stinginess."

There was a sort of dashing, rustic beauty about Susie Carter that made her quite a belle in her set. Her dark hair was long and abundant, her cheeks were rosy and her eyes sparkled when she was animated. She was always ready to sing or frolic, and a leader in all the "plays" with which the young people enlivened their taffy-pullings and rag-sewings. No one could complain of her inactivity at such places as these, and one who had seen only her listless ways at home would have been surprised at the transformation wrought in her by the society of others.

Susie Carter is not the only girl in the United States of whom that might be said. There are many whose home and social lives differ widely, not only in activity but in dress, in manners and in disposition. The girls who are all sweetness and courtesy and helpfulness in society are too often cross and selfish and lazy at home. Their smiles and kind deeds are put on with their good clothes and aired for the commendation of strangers and the overwhelming of rivals, while those who love them best are treated to cross words and unkind ways.

At heart Susie was not a bad girl. She was very sympathetic toward those in trouble, and ready to do anything to help them. "When she felt like it" she could fly around and work as well as anybody. She loved her mother and sisters, but she loved herself more.

From her early youth she had been accustomed to place her own comfort and pleasure before that of any one else, and the habits of selfishness had grown with the years and bound her more firmly in their toils. Her life had very few pleasures. Her home was situated in the little clearing in the woods, with no other house in sight. Her days were spent with her mother in doing up the little work there was to be done about the home. She had little to read, even if she had cared to spend her time in that way, which she certainly did not. There were few places to go. "Preaching" was held in the church once a month. There was Sunday-school every Sunday, and she usually attended it, simply because it was "some place to go" and the rest of the young people were to be met there. In the winter time there were occasional taffy-pullings, rag-sewings and apple-parings at the homes of the neighbors. In the summer they had "singings," and once in awhile there was a basket-meeting in some grove, which was al-

ways considered a grand occasion among the people. There were frequent spelling-schools in the winter evenings, which Susie never failed to attend, although she never would take part in the exercises. Her knowledge of the spelling book was too limited to allow her to "take the floor," so she contented herself with sitting in the back part of the house and talking to "the boys," while her rival, Mollie Dalton, carried off the honors. This was a bitter thing to Susie, although she never would acknowledge it. When invited to spell she would toss her head and say, "Oh dear, no. What do I want to spell for? It's a sight more fun to sit back here and watch the rest make fools of themselves. I've got far enough to walk home, without tirin' myself to death a-standin' up on the floor all evenin'." Thus she managed to give the impression that it was not from lack of ability that she failed to "take part," and one young fellow once remarked:

"I'll bet ef Suse Carter would jest take the floor oncet, Moll Dalton would git her walkin' papers in a hurry." To which his fellows assented. In this way Mollie's triumph was robbed of its glory, and Susie managed to "hold her own" in the estimation of her companions.

Jane did not attend very many of these

social gatherings in the winter time. After walking to and from school, and going through the work of the day, she was usually too tired to think of taking the long walks that were often required. She was only a young girl, although Susie looked upon her as quite an old maid, and was as fond as any one of lively company and "fun." Like most girls twenty years of age Jane had her friends among the young men, and received more or less attention from them. It was the custom in that part of Indiana for the girls to go to their parties or other places of entertainment in one another's company, perhaps half a dozen together. The young men usually gathered together in the same way. It was no uncommon thing to see a group of girls sauntering along the road with a group of young men following within speaking distance. There would be much joking and laughter, but the young people never "coupled off" until on their homeward trips. As a general thing the young men went with first one girl and then another. Whenever a young fellow began to confine his attentions to one particular girl, to see her home from every place where they met and to go home partnerless if she were absent, they called it "keepin' reg'lar comp'ny," and joked the pair accordingly.

Jane Carter was well liked by the young men in her community, not only because they found her pleasant company, but also because she was considered the smartest girl in the neighborhood. It was well known that under her management the home farm had increased in productiveness, and Susie had given every one the impression that Jane was saving "a pile of money" out of her school wages. She was therefore looked upon as a desirable girl by the most sensible young men of the community, and several of them vied in striving for her favor. Among these was one who bore the classical name of Cyrus Smith. He was a good, honest, warm-hearted young fellow, industrious and "powerful fore-handed," according to the popular verdict. He owned a little fifteen-acre farm between the Carter place and the Landing, and had already built a snug little cabin and a log stable upon it. He was a lively, good-humored fellow and a great favorite among the young people. There was therefore considerable jealousy on the part of some of the girls when Cyrus settled down to "keepin' reg'lar comp'ny" with Jane Carter.

"Cy. means business, you kin depend on that, an' I don't know as anybody kin blame him. Him an' Jane'll make a mighty good team, an'

I 'low they'll pull together pretty stiddy," one young man remarked.

"Ef Jane's a savin' her money, as I've been told, Cy. will git quite a lift when he gits her. He's nobody's fool, and you kin depend on it he knows which side o' his bread's buttered. I'll own I wouldn't mind havin' his chances myself," returned another young fellow.

In this way the affairs of the young couple were discussed by their friends and neighbors, and the whole match was fully settled before the two most interested parties had gotten far enough along to dream of such a thing.

Cyrus knew that he considered Jane the nicest and "likiest" girl of his acquaintance. He would go any distance and through any sort of weather if he thought he would have the pleasure of meeting her and walking home in her company. He knew just what days she made her regular trips to the Landing, and usually managed to be working near enough to the road to have the opportunity to speak to her as she passed. He took a sudden interest in fixing up his place and in doing everything by which he might make a little money to add to his possessions. He did not tell himself that he was in love with the girl. He only knew that he took pride in thinking of her as "his girl," and was unaccountably embarrassed

and unable to retort if others teased him about her. He thought of her all the time as he worked, and unconsciously consulted her taste in the arrangement and management of his little farm.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SERVICE OF LOVE.

SPRING had opened drizzly, muddy and chilly. The moss was green upon the trunks of the forest trees, and lichens and toadstools flourished about the decaying logs. The roads were almost impassable, and pedestrians found it necessary to wind in and out of the corners of the rail fences, or in some places were obliged to seek a path through the fields. There is no season of the year so depressing as the spring in the moist climate of Southern Indiana. Ague, rheumatism and neuralgia flourish, and the doctors reap their most abundant harvest.

Each day as she toiled to and from her school Jane Carter rejoiced to think that the term was almost over, and the wearisome walks would soon be at an end. She had already begun planning her summer's labors, and hoped to have quite a pleasant and profitable vacation from her school work.

The report of Katie's success in college, of the increasing pleasure in her work and the

marks of favor which she received from teachers and associates, filled Jane's heart with sisterly pride. She rejoiced in every advance which Katie made, and studied earnestly over the problem of how to keep her in school until her course was completed. It must be accomplished in some way—but how? That was the point that troubled Jane. She considered every possible means of adding to her little savings, that Katie might be helped as much as she could spare. Sometimes a great heartsick longing surged over her to be with Katie, to have her loving, intelligent companionship, and share in her studies. Her old ambition still lived in her breast, and often rebelled against the chains that held it down to the commonest duties and narrowest bounds of life.

“I cannot bear it, I cannot bear it,” she would sometimes cry despairingly. “It is nothing but work and eat and sleep, work and eat and sleep. Is this all there is in life for me? Will I never know anything more, will I never be anything better, will I never do anything greater than what the present holds? Since God has put this desire in my heart, why does he keep me here and shut me in on every side? If he is good, why does he not give me good things? Why does he give all

of his good things to other people—to many who do not care for them and cast them aside—when I want them so and would so eagerly use them if they were only mine? Is this justice? Is this kindness? Why is it?”

Poor Jane was not the only mortal who has fallen into this slough of despond, this favorite pitfall, which the evil one spreads in the pathway of those who are serving the Lord. These trying questions come to every one at times, and many sink beneath the burden of doubts which they produce and give up their efforts to continue in the Lord's way. They fail to understand that these mysterious dealings of Providence are but the training for higher and better things. They cannot see that what appears good from their low standpoint may be seen to be evil by the Lord who looks from above. The truest kindness and love of a wise parent is often shown in his withholding some hurtful thing upon which his child has set its heart. The child who is unhappy with the toys it holds would not long be satisfied if the thing for which it cries was given it, and those who fail to find the blessing in present possessions would fall short of happiness and success if wider fields were opened to them.

Jane Carter had no one to explain these things to her. She puzzled over them and

rebelled at them, and sometimes almost gave up her faith in God.

"I will not trust him any more. I will not pray to him any more, for he does not answer my prayers. I will just go on by myself, and do my own way," she would say, rebelliously. Then her loneliness, her helplessness, her ignorance would dawn upon her.

"If I could only see ahead, if I could only know what is best," and then conscience would whisper:

"God sees. God knows. Trust to him, and some day you will understand why your way was narrow, and why your prayers were not answered in just the way you desired. Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you." And for that time the victory would be won, and peace would return to her soul.

For several months after Katie's departure Jane was very lonely. Neither Susie nor her mother cared for the things in which she was most interested, nor did they favor any of her efforts to improve the existing condition of things. The sluggishness, the conservatism of preceding generations held them in the rut of olden customs, and blinded them to the advantages to be derived from newer methods and more energetic ways. They did not feel their limitations because they did not know

them. Hence Jane's more advanced ideas met with but scant favor, and her efforts were not seconded by them. This made her miss Katie's sympathetic companionship the more, and made her sister's weekly letters still more precious.

As the weeks passed she had grown more accustomed to this state of affairs, and had overcome her loneliness to a great degree.

Then Cyrus Smith, with his manly ways and his manly friendship, came to fill the solitary place in her heart, and life took on a rosy tinge for her. She forgot the narrowness of her sphere, the thwarting of her ambitions, the unpleasant features of her condition. She only knew that she was very happy, and did not stop to ask the reason why she found life so changed.

So in spite of the disagreeable, depressing spring weather she sang cheerily on her way to and from school, and looked forward with a light heart to the summer that was drawing near, feeling some way that further happiness was in store for her.

"I hain't been a-feelin' a bit well to-day," Mrs. Carter said to Jane one evening. "There must be a storm a-comin'. I've had sech a misery in my bones all day, an' a kind of creepin' ague all over me. I do hope I hain't a-goin' to have a spell of chills an' fever, like I

had three year ago. I wish't you'd do the tendin' to the milk to-night, Janie, so's I won't have to go out in the damp. Susie hain't no 'count fer sech work as that. She's too keerless about strippin' the cows, an' we don't want to run no risk of dryin' them up jest now when butter's sech a good price."

"Don't worry about them," Jane answered, cheerily. "I'll tend to them, and you'd better just sit here by the fire and keep good and warm. Shall I brew you some herb tea now, or would you rather wait till after supper?"

"I've been a-settin' right here, an' have kep' up a good fire all day, but it seems as if it won't warm me. I guess you may make me some tea, and I'll git to bed an' see ef I can't git into a sweat."

Jane bustled around and soon had her mother in bed and as comfortable as possible. Then she went out into the darkness and dampness of the early dusk, and hurried to do up her chores. An undefinable feeling of dread came over her, and she could not shake it off. Was it possible that her beautiful dreams for the vacation so near at hand were to be destroyed? She was glad when her work was done, and she could join Susie in the warmth and light of the basement room. Then her depression vanished.

"Mother will be all right in the morning," she said, and she settled down in the big rocker before the blazing fire and dreamed her happy dreams as she gazed into the glowing coals.

But she was mistaken. Morning found her mother suffering intensely, and, in spite of the falling rain, Jane found it necessary to hitch old Jim to the little wagon and start to the Landing in search of a doctor.

Cyrus Smith saw her coming down the road as fast as old Jim could make his way through the heavy mud, and he hastened to meet her.

"What's the matter, Janie? What brings you here through this rain, and at this time of day?"

Jane explained the situation and Cyrus promptly took old Jim by the bridle and turned his head toward home.

"You go right back, Janie," he said, with gentle authority. "I'm not going to see you take such a ride as that through such weather as this. Besides, you are needed at home. I'll jump on to my bay colt and I'll get the doctor to your house sooner than you and old Jim could get to town. Is there any other errand I can do for you in town?"

Jane mentioned a few things she needed for

the invalid, and then, after thanking him for his kind assistance, started back home.

"There never was such a good, thoughtful fellow," she murmured, as she drove along. "There isn't one fellow in a hundred that would be so kind—but then Cy. isn't like any other fellow that ever lived." Then she looked back and waved her hand to the young man who was just closing his gate behind him as he started for the Landing.

"There goes the best and truest girl in all God's green earth. Not one girl in a hundred would start out in such weather and over such roads as this, but then Janie isn't like other girls." And he smiled in spite of the dashing rain, as his horse splashed on its way, and neither he nor Janie thought of the dreariness of the day, since each was dreaming of the other.

When Jane reached home she found her mother much worse, and gratefully thought of Cyrus' wisdom in sending her back. She was kept so busy that she did not note the passage of time, and was much surprised when Cyrus and the doctor arrived.

It was surprising how many helpful things the young man found to do while the old doctor was busy with his patient. When all of the outdoor work was done, and a generous

supply of wood carried in, Cyrus sat down in the basement and waited for a chance to speak with Janie. Presently she came downstairs, and her face was very grave.

"How's your mother, Janie? Does the doctor think she is much sick?" he asked, awkwardly.

"I'm afraid she's pretty bad, Cy.," the girl answered. "He's afraid of some sort of rheumatism. He says that's what it will be if it runs on. He's coming back to-night; so that shows he thinks she's pretty bad. I don't know what I'm to do about my school. This is the last week, but I can't go while mother is so bad. Susie can't take care of her alone."

"That's what I stayed to ask you about. Of course you can't go. You are needed right here. So if you would like, I'll ride over there and tell Mr. Watkins how it is. Then I can come around by Aunt Phrony West's and get her to come over and help you. She's a master hand in sickness, and I 'low you'll want some experienced body to help you take care of your mother." Jane's eyes were full of tears as she raised them to his face.

"You're just the kindest fellow that ever lived," she said, impulsively. "But it will be such a bad ride and it is raining so hard"—with a sudden thought for his welfare. "I do

hate to have you go. Maybe the rain will slack up pretty soon, and then it will not be such a bad trip. I would like to let Mr. Watkins know why I am not there, and I would be very, very glad of Aunt Phrony's help, although I hadn't thought of sending for her. You are so kind, Cy., and I don't know how to thank you enough for your help."

The young man's eyes and voice were very tender as he answered, "I wouldn't count anything too much to do for you, Janie. I'm only too glad to be able to help you, and I want you to promise to let me know any time you need me. I've my overcoat here, so the rain won't hurt me. I guess I'd better go right along, and get Aunt Phrony here as soon as possible. I'll stop in and see how your mother is as I come back."

He hurried away without giving Jane time to thank him any further, but he carried in his heart the memory of the warm, loving look he had caught in her eyes, and rejoiced that he could prove his devotion to her by serving her in this time of need. It was a service of love, and therefore a service of pleasure. In such a problem as that, "service" is cancelled out, and only love and pleasure remain.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN UNFORESEEN TROUBLE.

IN spite of the doctor's efforts and Aunt Phrony's care Mrs. Carter's illness was of long duration. Jane went back to her school and finished up the few remaining days of the term. Then she took Aunt Phrony's place at her mother's bedside. Upon Susie fell the brunt of the work in and about the house. She did it cheerfully and uncomplainingly at first, but as the weeks wore on and her mother still continued helpless, she began to grow restless and dissatisfied.

Jane found that under her sister's careless management their revenue from cows and chickens was materially decreasing, and gave token of ceasing altogether if something was not done. So as soon as her mother's condition had improved sufficiently to allow her to sit up, Jane resumed the outdoor work, and left Susie to do the lighter tasks and wait upon the invalid.

Mrs. Carter was a large, heavy woman, one

who had never had any illness more serious than a siege of fever and ague, and who, therefore, had been heedless in regard to the care of her health. She had exposed herself needlessly to the changes of the damp climate, and planted the seeds of ill-health deeply in her system. Now that disease had taken so strong a hold upon her she could not shake it off. Instead of growing stronger and regaining her old vigor she found herself condemned to sit helplessly in her chair, while her stiff and painful joints grew more stiff and painful as time went by. She was not a woman to accept such a condition either sweetly or patiently.

She grew sharp and querulous. She was constantly irritated by Susie's careless, untidy ways, and scolded and fretted because of her own inability to remedy the situation. She could not interfere so much with Jane's work, as it was mostly out of doors, the care of the stock and chickens, the making of the garden, and working with milk and butter down at the spring, but she worried her continually and fretted over the increase in expenses which her illness and helplessness caused.

This last point gave Jane much anxious and troubled thought. The doctor's bill had rendered it impossible for her to help Katie, and

she feared the girl would have to give up her studies and return to her backwoods home with little prospect of ever being able to resume her beloved college work. There were constant extra expenses, caused by Mrs. Carter's condition, that made sad inroads into Jane's school money, and the income from the farm was materially decreased by the loss of her mother's help and by Susie's inefficient management.

It was just at this time that Will's letter with its enclosed check reached Jane, and lifted the burden that oppressed her.

The money provided some comforts for the mother that had previously been out of reach. It also removed the fear that the living for the family would be cut short for the year.

A little later came the word of Katie's good fortune in securing the place at Mrs. Porter's, and of her ability to support herself through another college year. Thus the burden of care was lifted from Jane's mind, and life became bright again.

During all this time Cyrus Smith was un-failing in his kind helpfulness. Jane watched for his coming, forgot her trials in his presence and relied upon his judgment in her work. He was more like a good, faithful brother, than a lover, in his ways, and it was

long before Jane realized whither affairs were drifting. They were standing in the porch one afternoon, and he was admiring her flowers which were in gorgeous bloom.

"I never saw any one who could beat you at raising posies," he said. "Even Mrs. Davidson's ain't as big and as deep colored as yours. It must be the richness of those old rotting stumps that makes yours so much nicer than hers."

"Yes," Jane answered, "I believe the stumps have been an advantage after all, though I did use to worry over them, and think it wasn't worth while to try to make our yard look pretty while they were in it. But since I've covered them up with vines and filled the tops with flowers they are real ornaments. Some of them are getting so rotten that they are falling to pieces, and I'm really afraid that some day they will all be gone and I'll have to content myself with common flower-beds. I hadn't thought about the decay of the stump making the flowers nicer, but I believe you are right. The flowers improved the stump, and now the stumps are improving the flowers. How strange."

"I didn't know you were so fond of stumps, Janie, or I wouldn't have been so particular to get them all out of my yard. I can haul

some back in, if you think they'd be any improvement."

Jane laughed a little nervously. She had not thought of having a controlling interest in Cyrus Smith's dooryard, and the suddenness of the idea embarrassed her.

"No, no," she said. "There are stumps enough in people's lives, as well as their dooryards, without putting any needless ones into them. It is well enough to make the best of those one is obliged to have, without seeking for those that don't belong to us."

"I don't understand what you mean," Cyrus said, wonderingly. He was half inclined to be offended. Did Jane mean to say that she did not want to have anything to do with his dooryard? Jane saw that something was wrong, and hastened to explain her words by telling the story of the stumps and of the lessons she had drawn from them.

"They've helped me ever so much, and they still help me every day. Whenever anything hard comes to me I try to see how I can make it better my life. It is surprising how many good things people can find when they're looking for them. It seems like the Lord sends me a great many stumps, though," she added, sadly.

"I wish I could take them all out of your

life. I hope that some day I can," he said, tenderly. Then stooping suddenly, he kissed her and went away.

Jane stood motionless where he had left her until he disappeared down the road. Then snatching up her sunbonnet she hurried away to the solitude of the ravine below the spring, where she might think over this new happiness that dawned before her. She realized all at once that Cyrus loved her, and that she had given her heart to him. The thought was full of joy, and life seemed very bright and beautiful to her that summer day. She dwelt upon the tenderness in his tones, and felt again the touch of his lips. She thought of his manliness, his industry, his kindness and faithfulness, and exulted in the thought that she had won the love of such a young man as this. She dwelt on every event of the past weeks, and recalled every word of the conversation they had held that afternoon. She smiled happily as she remembered his anxiety to arrange even his dooryard to suit her. It was pleasant to feel that he thought of her as the future mistress of his cozy little home, and she dreamed of how pleasant it would be to have his strong arm to shield her from care and toil. Susie's impatient call broke in upon her reverie, and she came down from her

castles in the air to the commonplace duties of the stable and chicken-yard.

For several days she dreamed her dreams of future happiness. Then an unusual spell of pain required the doctor's care for her mother. She stood on the porch for a moment as the physician was leaving, and asked him :

“Doctor, how soon do you think mother will be able to get about again? Do you suppose she will be well enough to do anything by the time my school begins this fall?”

The doctor was so slow in answering that her heart sank before he uttered a word. He seemed to be studying for words to fit the gravity of the case. At length he answered :

“Miss Carter, it would not be right for me to raise false hopes, only to have you disappointed. From present indications I do not think that your mother will ever be any better than she is. The disease has settled in her limbs, and resists all remedies in a way that is very discouraging. I do not mean for you to get the idea that her life is in any immediate danger, for her rheumatism is hardly advanced enough to reach her heart as yet. What I mean is this, it is very doubtful whether she ever recovers the use of her limbs. She may live for many years in just her present condition. It is only right that I should tell you

this, for you will have to lay all your plans in accord with such a prospect. I sincerely hope that some remedy may yet reach her case and this trouble be averted, but it now looks extremely doubtful."

He gave her a few directions in regard to the efficacy of frequent bathing and rubbing the diseased parts and then bowed himself away.

Once more Jane sought the solitude of the ravine. She could not face her mother and Susie until she had faced the appalling knowledge of this new and unequalled burden. Her mother a helpless cripple for years and years! How dreadful! What could they do? Suppose she could not leave home to teach, how would they manage to live? What would become of Katie? Would she have to come home and take up the burden? What a great and forbidding "stump" the Lord had placed in her life this time. Where was the good—where was the beauty in this one? What would Cyrus say when he heard of it? Cyrus? A sudden terror swept down upon her at thought of him. What did this mean to Cyrus and herself?

She sprang from the ground where she had thrown herself in her grief, and began pacing wildly to and fro beneath the trees. The

worst of her calamity had only just dawned upon her. She had dreamed of some day going to be mistress of that little home, to be the beloved wife of its owner, to be relieved from the strain of toil and anxiety that now rested upon her, to be supremely happy all the rest of her days. Must all this be given up for the sake of the three who were dependent on her? Must she break her lover's heart, and her own, by sending him away to live his life without her, while she drudged on into a dreary old age? Oh, it must not be! She would not have it so! She could not bear it!

Urged on by her desperate agony she tramped away through the woods, heeding not where she was going, seeing nothing of the beauty and brightness of the summer morning. It was winter and night in her soul. The bitterness of a human Gethsemane was upon her, and beyond it loomed the cross of self-denial for the sake of those she loved.

She threw herself at last upon her knees, and in an agony of tears she prayed and prayed. It was long before she could gain control of herself and look calmly at the prospect before her.

Cyrus was young, and he was poor. He could make life comfortable for her, but it would not be right to impose the support of

the whole family upon him, with perhaps constant heavy doctor-bills for years and years.

No doubt he would be sorry for awhile over his loss of her, but he would live to be happy and to find some one else to love. She must not hamper him, and ruin his life by casting this heavy burden upon his shoulders. Since God had sent it to her, no doubt he would give her strength to bear it, and perhaps some day—a long way in the future—she would be able to see the blessing in it. It was all very dark, but she would trust to him. She could not go alone. And with the final cry, “O Lord, help me! O Lord, help me!” she turned toward home.

The tinkle of a familiar bell in the thicket recalled her to present duties, and provided her with an excuse for her long absence from the house. The cows had found a weak place in the fence and strayed away from their own wood lot. She drove them back again, found the weak place in the fence and repaired it, then went up to the spring and was busy with her work there when Susie came down for supplies for dinner. In answer to Susie’s questions she replied :

“Yes—I’ve been crying—some. The doctor worried me by saying that he’s afraid mother will not be able to get about before

my school opens. Do you suppose you can get along here without me? I don't see how we can live unless I teach this winter, but it will be very hard on you."

"You'll have to teach. There's no getting around that. We've got to have the money. But, oh dear! I don't see how I'll ever stand it to be tied here at home the whole enduring winter, with nothing to do but work, work the whole time. Nothing ever does happen right for me. I think it's about time for Katie to come home and take her share of it. 'Tisn't fair for her to have everything, and me have nothing."

Jane had already started for the house before Susie's tirade was finished, so the young grumbler was unanswered.

"Does she never think of anybody but herself?" Jane wondered, drearily.

Mrs. Carter began complaining as soon as Jane entered, because of the latter's long absence.

"Where have you been, and what have you been doing?" she demanded.

"I was down in Dobson's woods," Jane replied. "I heard old Brindle's bell down there, and found the cows had broken out. I brought them home and mended the fence. Then I was busy at the spring till Susie came."

“ Well, I must say you look all tuckered out, an’ your face is as red as a turkey gobbler’s. You hain’t no business to overheat yourself that way. This hain’t no time for you to be a gittin’ down sick. But law ! what else kin I expect, with me tied here to this cheer an’ not able to look after things. I ’low the house will come tumbling about our ears some of these days. It’s just Carter luck. Draw me up to the table, Janie. Susie, lift the dinner, an’ be spry about it too. It’s a long while between meals when one has nothing to do but set and think about it, an’ smell the vittles a cookin’.”

Jane attended to her mother’s wants and helped Susie about her work, then she sat down to the table and made a pretence of eating.

She feared that her mother would note her lack of appetite, and question her in regard to it ; but some blunder of poor Susie’s turned Mrs. Carter’s attention in that direction, and Jane escaped unnoticed.

CHAPTER XXV.

AN ACCEPTED CROSS.

ABOUT a week later Cyrus Smith stopped at the door one evening with a message for Jane from the directors of a school for which she had applied. They had sent her notice that the place had been given to her, and that they desired the term to open the first of October. Cyrus chatted for a few minutes with Mrs. Carter and Susie, then took his leave.

"Come down to the gate, Janie. I have something I want to say to you," he said to the girl who had accompanied him out to the porch. Jane felt instinctively what was coming, and shrank from the ordeal before her. The walk to the gate was taken in silence. A dumb misery was upon Jane, and Cyrus was casting about in his mind for words in which to express himself. When they reached the gate Jane leaned her arm upon one of the posts and waited for him to begin.

"Are you going to take the school, Janie?"

It was not the question for which she had been looking, and it took her by surprise.

"Yes. Why?" she asked, briefly.

"Can't your folks get along without your teaching?" he asked, awkwardly.

"No. There isn't much to be made off the farm. Will don't appear able to do a great deal for us, though he has helped considerable this summer. Katie has all she can do to make her own way, and I can't think of stopping her to help us. So you see, I'll have to teach, and I'm ever so much obliged to you for coming to tell me about the school."

"But, Janie," cried Cyrus, desperately, "I don't want you to teach. I want you to give me the right to take care of you and save you from such hard work. I can't bear to see you slave so, dear. I love you, and I want you to be my wife and come and make my home happy. I hain't half good enough and smart enough for you I know, but I love you with all my heart and I'll do my best to make you happy. Don't say no, Jane," for the girl had turned from him and buried her face in her arms as she leaned against the post. "Have I made you angry, Janie? Don't cry so. I didn't mean to make you feel so bad. Won't you tell me what is the matter? I thought you cared for me, too, at least I hoped so. Don't be angry with me."

"O Cy., it isn't that. How could I be angry

with you? Don't you see, can't you understand, how impossible it all is? The doctor says mother may live for years and years as she is now. She can never be any better. How could she and Susie live if I went away and left them? Katie will not be through school for three years yet, so she cannot help them. Don't you see how they need me?"

"But I need you too, Janie," he pleaded. "Let me do it all in your place. I am stronger than you. I would gladly do it for your sake."

"No, no," she cried. "It would not be right to burden you so. I will not do it. No, no!" with a passionate gesture, "I know what you would say. You think you would not mind it, but you would. You would get very weary of the burden. You could never get ahead. You would always be run to death, and worried with poverty. No, Cyrus, it is better that I should say, no. My work is here; and the Lord would not even bless me with happiness if I were either to desert my post, or to shirk all my burdens upon your shoulders. Try and forget about me. You will not mind, after awhile, and I—will—be glad to—see you happy and doing well." Her voice faltered dangerously. It was hard to send him away

when her heart pleaded for his presence and his love. But the case had already been weighed and settled in these days that had passed since the doctor's warning, and Jane felt that she was right. It was all new to Cyrus, however, and he begged and pleaded with her to alter her decision, but in vain.

"Then, Janie, I will wait for you. Maybe your brother will come back, or Katie can take your place, or your mother may get well. I will not give you up. I will wait forever, if need be," he cried, passionately.

"No," Jane answered. "I will not let you bind yourself that way. I know how you feel now. But 'forever' is a long time, and you would get tired of living alone, and you might find some one else and—wish that you had not promised me."

"I don't believe you care for me at all," Cyrus exclaimed, angrily. "If you did you could not talk so. You would trust me more than that. If you don't care for me say so straight out, and be done with it, and I'll be satisfied to let you go your own way."

"If I did not care so much for your welfare and your happiness I would not send you away. I would be only too glad to shove my burdens upon you. But because I love you with all my heart I say *no, I will not marry*

you. You need not ask me again, for I will never change my answer." Then, because she could no longer control herself, she turned quickly from him and ran to the house.

With bowed head Cyrus stood, stunned and hurt, for a few minutes. Then he passed through the gate, closed it softly behind him and went away.

A few days later Aunt Phrony West came in to see Mrs. Carter, and among other things she said, "Had you heard about Cyrus Smith goin' away? You hadn't? I 'lowed mebbe you knowed all about it. But he has—cleared plum out. Sold his team an' his place an' ever'thing, an' jest gone clean off, nobody knows where. My John Henry seen him down to the Landing a-waitin' fer the boat, an' he said he was goin' off in search of a fortune. I wouldn't a-ben surprised at any of the other boys of the neighborhood a-doin' sech a crazy thing, but Cy.'s allus ben so stiddy that it plum took my breath away when I heerd of him a-flyin' the track. It shows one can't depend on nobody, nowadays."

Jane was sitting on the doorstep with a pan of apples in her lap, preparing apple-sauce for dinner, and she was thankful that her sunbonnet hid her face from Aunt Phrony's eyes, for she felt that they were upon her.

"Did you know that he was a-goin', Janie?" her mother inquired, bluntly.

"No. I have not seen him since that evening he stopped at the door to tell me about the school. He never said a word then about going away," she answered, steadily.

"Well, all I hev to say is, it's mighty queer. A sudden notion must have took him. All I hope is he'll do better'n Will has. He don't appear to be makin' a fortune very fast."

The two old friends strayed off to a discussion of Will and his supposed ill-fortune, and Cyrus Smith was forgotten.

Jane finished her apple-sauce and put it on to cook, then took her bucket and went down to the spring. The tears fell fast from beneath the old blue sunbonnet as she went about her tasks. Her heart was very heavy. Cyrus had taken her at her word and gone away forever. She had not thought of his going clear away. She had thought to have the joy of seeing him—of speaking to him occasionally. But now he had gone where she would never see him again, and, worst of all, his parting words had been words of anger. It lacked many hours of sundown that bright September day, but night had already closed down over Jane's desolate heart. For weeks she looked eagerly forward to mail-day, hoping

that he would send her a letter—just a few lines to let her know where he was and that he was not angry with her; but the letter never came, and hope died in her heart. She took up the dull round of school-work, and strove by hard labor to forget the sorrow that had come to her. There was only one comfort for her, and she rested her soul upon it—she had done right. She had given up her own selfish interests for the sake of her mother and sisters, and for the sake of Cyrus himself. She grieved for herself, but she was glad for them, and she felt that God approved of her sacrifice.

“I will not grieve and worry,” she said to herself, one day as she tended her flowers. “God knows what is best for all of us, and I can depend on his love and his help. These stumps look bare and desolate now, since the frost has touched the flowers; but when spring comes the flowers will bloom again, and hide their ugliness. So I will wait patiently. I must remember what Cyrus said about the ugly stumps making the blossoms more beautiful. Perhaps that is what God intends in my life, but—it is hard after all.” Her tears fell even as she spoke. She was but a young girl, and her heart went out after the only lover she had ever known.

There was very little but hard work in Jane's life that winter. There were the customary gatherings of the young people, but both girls could not go and leave their mother alone.

"I stay cooped up here all day, and never see a bit of fun—nothing but work—and mother scolding all the time," Susie said, petulantly. "It's only fair for you to stay at night, and let me go and have some fun. You're tired anyway, after walking so far to school, and Cyrus isn't here any more; so I shouldn't think you'd mind staying at home." So Jane remained with her mother, and Susie flew about among the young people, finding her highest happiness in the gratification of her own selfish desires.

Bright letters came frequently from Katie, telling of her work in school and of her happiness in the pursuit of knowledge. At Mrs. Porter's desire she spent her Christmas vacation at that lady's home, and the friendship between the young girl and the invalid was greatly strengthened.

"I am to spend next summer with her," Katie wrote. "And she promises that she will see that I have sufficient means to take me through another year. It does seem as if God opens up the way of wisdom steadily before me. I thank him for it, even while I cannot

but wonder at the favor he shows to me. But Janie, dear, in all my searching I have found that there is no better wisdom than 'the wisdom that cometh down from above,' and I strive at all times to make it my first aim in life. I am very happy, but I do not forget that I owe all this to you. Some day I hope to take your place, and repay you for all that you have made possible for me."

And Jane's heart was comforted, and she learned that, in spite of disappointment and self-denial, life might have a happiness and peace that come only from the knowledge of right doing.

Early in the summer came a sad letter from Katie telling of the sudden death of her friend and benefactress. It also contained the surprising news that Mrs. Porter had left Katie means enough to finish her desired course, and give her beside a few extra branches which she had greatly coveted, but which she had deemed beyond her reach.

Jane's heart bounded with joy. Katie's future was assured, and that much care was lifted from her burden.

Her chief anxiety now was for Susie. The girl was wayward and willful, and inclined to go with wild companions. Jane's remonstrances were of no avail, and her mother's

scoldings only drove Susie forward in her course. As soon as school had closed she had shifted the burden of her home duties upon Jane, doing only what she chose, and running about the neighborhood much as she had done before her mother's illness. In her ignorance she craved nothing better than the mild excitements she enjoyed. She would walk miles to attend a simple singing-party, and the "kissing plays" of a taffy-pulling were the wildest dissipation with her. There was nothing really bad about the girl. She was only a foolish young thing, swayed by the impulse of the moment, and setting up the gratification of her passing whims as the perfection of earthly happiness. After all she differed only in degree from many who are more highly cultured and have greater opportunities.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A RASH STEP.

"EF I was you, I jest wouldn't do it. 'Tain't fair for you to have to stick at home an' work like a nigger the whole endurin' time, an' wear common old duds, with her a-actin' the fine lady an' wearin' good clo'es an' doin' nothin'; an', if I was you I'd jest let 'em know I wasn't a-goin' to put up with it a bit longer. You're jest as good as Katie any day; an' I say, an' ever'body says 'tain't fair the way she's a-treatin' you an' Jane."

"I wouldn't mind it, Lize, if I thought there'd ever be any end to it, or if mother would jest git well again. But Katie's got two years more to go to school, an' mother jest sets there an' scolds the whole endurin' day. I can't do a thing to please her. An' Jane's got so awful particular about the butter makin' that it's a perfect nuisance. She's got so that every roll has to be made jest a certain size, an' ever' one wrapped by itself in a butter cloth an' then packed jest so in the jar; an' if 'tain't done that way it's all got to be done

over. To be sure, she gets more for it, but then it's an awful sight of trouble, an' I don't think the extry money pays for the extry work."

Susie's tones were very complaining as she poured this woeful story into the ears of her confidential friend, Lize Barker. She had been over to spend the afternoon with Lize, and now the latter was "goin' a piece" with her on her road home.

"It don't," was Lize's forcible reply to Susie's concluding remark. "What does five cents a pound more for butter amount to?"

"Ten cents," corrected Susie.

"Well, ten cents a pound, then. What does ten cents a pound amount to in a year. You'd hev to sell a thousand pounds to make a hundred dollars extry, an' you know you don't anywheres nigh do that. Air you a-goin' to work hours an' hours for nothing? I wouldn't. Ef Jane wants it done that way I'd jest let her do it herself, or hev Katie come home an' do it fer her. But law! when Katie does come home you'll see whether she'll work any. She'll be too fine to 'sociate with the rest of us, an' she won't want to dirty her white hands in hoein' in the gyarden or workin' in greasy butter. You needn't set your heart on Katie helpin' you out any."

Lize spoke spitefully, for down in the bottom of her heart she cherished an old grudge against Katie Carter for surpassing her in school, and more than once spelling her down in the district spelling matches. She also had an especial reason of her own for increasing Susie's dissatisfaction and encouraging her to rebel against the state of affairs at home. It was this latter reason that bore chief weight this afternoon as she walked home with her friend.

"Ef I was you, I wouldn't stand it a bit longer. There ain't any sense in you a-stayin' there and a-wearin' yourself out for Katie, when ef you'd jest say the word, you could git out of it in a minute an' live easy all the rest of your life."

"I'm shore I don't see how I can git out of it," sighed Susie. "I'd do it in a minute, ef I could."

"Law, now! I kin tell you. Budd's jest a-dyin' to marry you. He'd do jest anything for you, ef you'd only say you'd have him, an' he'd see to it that you shouldn't never have to work so hard. Uncle Jake's a-goin' to move to the Landin' to work in the cooper shops, an' he's give Budd the rentin' of his place ef he wants it. An' Budd, he says to me las' night, 'Lize, ef I thought Suse 'd

marry me, I'd rent that place in a powerful hurry.' "

"I don't know 'bout gittin' married," replied blushing Susie. "'Tain't no fun to settle down an' be old folks, an' not run around any more, an' hev to stay at home an' work all the time. 'Tain't that I don't think a heap of Budd—'tain't that," she added quickly, as she saw the frown on Lize's brow. "You know I think as much of Budd as you do of Jake Hopkins—but then—but then—I don't know about marryin' him, not jest now, anyway."

"Well," responded Lize, with a toss of her head, "you kin do jest as you please, but I'll warn you to keep a weather eye out while you're a-foolin' round an' a-puttin' Budd off fer nothin', Moll Dalton would give the whole world to git him, an' she's jest a-layin' herself out to cut you out. It was only yesterday she was over to our house, as sweet as you please, an' all dressed up in a new pink calico; an' she fooled around an' stayed so late that Budd had to walk home with her. That's the way she's a-workin'. An' when a fellow like Budd Barker has made up his mind that he's a-goin' to settle down fer hisself, ef he can't git the girl he's after, he's mighty apt to take the girl that's after him. That's all I've got to say.

"Here's the forks, so I'll hev to go back. You jest think about what I've told you."

Lize turned abruptly and went back home. Susie walked slowly along her homeward road, and pondered on what had been said. Budd Barker had been her especial company for some time past. He had at one time been devoted to Mollie Dalton, but Susie had managed to divert his attentions to herself, and had been extremely elated by his growing preference for her society. He was a dashing sort of fellow, with black eyes and curling black hair which he combed down over his forehead in a style which the neighborhood girls considered irresistible. He was wild and reckless and not unduly fond of hard work; and it was even whispered about the community that he had been seen in the saloon at the Landing more than once. But, for all that, he was a supreme favorite with the girls of the district, all of whom were more or less jealous of Susie because of the preference he showed for her.

Lize had been shrewd enough to guess that there was no surer way of persuading Susie to marry her brother than to hint that there was imminent danger of her losing him altogether. Hence the story of Moll's visit, which she invented solely for the occasion.

Susie's blood was at fever heat. "Moll Dalton take Budd Barker away from her? Not much. She'd die before she'd let her do that. It was mean for her to have to stay at home and work hard while Katie did nothing. And Budd did love her—he'd said so more than once—and she was sure he'd be good to her if she married him. And there wouldn't be much work. Just keeping house for the two of them. And, anyway, Moll Dalton shouldn't cut her out."

These were her thoughts as she walked along. All at once Budd appeared, coming whistling along the road in front of her apparently not expecting to meet her. How was Susie to know that his coming at this moment was only a part of the scheme which the brother and sister had arranged, and which Lize had worked successfully so far? The girl blushed as the young man met her, and her face showed unmistakable pleasure at his presence. Budd understood at once that the advantage was all his. He expressed his regrets at being away from home when she was there, and vowed he'd make up for his disappointment by walking home with her, which was quite agreeable to Susie.

It is needless to chronicle the conversation that passed between them as they went slowly

along. It is sufficient to relate that a few days later Susie left home "to go and see Lize," and when she came back Budd came with her and they announced that they had been to the Landing and been married by the justice of the peace.

Mrs. Carter scolded furiously over the announcement which had little effect on her obstinate daughter. Jane was overwhelmed with sorrow and dismay. She expressed a little of it to Susie, as they went away to pack up the young bride's belongings.

"How could you do it, Susie? How could you? Why, you're hardly more than a child yet. Why should you settle down to be an old woman so soon? I'm afraid you've made trouble for yourself, too, if what folks say about Budd is true. I'm afraid he won't be good to you, and that you'll have a hard life of it. O Susie, how could you do such a thing?"

Susie was more troubled than she cared to confess. She was only just beginning to realize the rashness and the irrevocableness of the step she had taken, and Jane's words awakened unpleasant forebodings. Still, she had sought her own selfish happiness and was determined to assure herself that she had gained it. So she fortified herself by saying:

"Well, I cared too much for Budd to let Moll Dalton take him away from me, so I jest took him for good an' all. Besides, I was tired of workin' here with mother scoldin' an' Katie away doin' nothin', an' I jest concluded I wouldn't stand it no longer. Budd has taken his Uncle Jake's place an' we're goin' to set up housekeepin' there next week. I'm goin' to have things easy after this."

"I hope so," replied Jane, sadly. "I truly hope so, Susie dear. If I was sure you would always be happy I wouldn't say a word. I would only be glad for you."

"You needn't worry yourself about me, Janie," said Susie, penitently. "I'm sure I'm happy now, an' that I always will be. Don't you worry about me one bit. Jest come over to my house once in awhile an' see for yourself if I ain't happy."

There was not much more of the conversation. Jane's heart was too heavy for words, and Susie was eager to get the dreaded interview over and get away to her new home. Jane watched the young couple go down the road till they passed from sight; then, dropping down on the porch steps, she buried her face in her arms and wept bitterly. A feeling of utter desolation and helplessness swept over her. Her last helper was gone. How was

she to care for her invalid mother and yet make a living for them both? Katie must not come home—she must not. That was not to be considered for a moment. Just when the way had been opened for her to complete her course this trouble had come; but it should not be allowed to interfere.

Jane's meditations were interrupted by her mother's call and she responded at once.

"Now whatever air we to do, Janie?" was the question that greeted her. "It did seem as if we had things hard enough before, without bein' left in this shape. Whatever air we to do? Me helpless an' crippled an' not even able to do fer myself, an' you with ever'thing on your hands, an' the livin' to make besides. I don't see fer the life of me how it's to be done."

"It does seem hard, mother, but we'll get along some way. We have the Lord yet to help us, and I am sure if we trust him that everything will come out right."

"Well, I don't know. You appear to have a good deal of faith in the Lord—more'n I've got—but I can't see as he's helped us much so far."

"Hasn't he helped me to get a good school every winter, and given me the health and strength to earn a living for us all? And

hasn't he blessed Katie wonderfully and helped her along in ways that we didn't expect?"

"Oh yes, I s'pose he has, ef you give him all the credit an' don't take none fer yourselves. But what's he done fer me and fer Will? An' what sort of goodness is this that he's showed to Susie?" grumbled the invalid.

"Your sickness is hard," Jane assented, tenderly. "But I am sure that somewhere in store is a blessing to make up for all of it, if we only accept it as God's best plan for us. As for Susie, that's hard to see. I'm afraid she's been so willful that the Lord's given up to let her have her own way, just to let her learn how much better it would have been if she had waited to let him work out her life for her."

"I'm afeard of it too. Susie never was happy onless she was havin' her own way. I'm sure I don't know where she got sech a selfish disposition. I'm certain 'twan't from the Ferguson side of the family. But I do know that her selfishness hain't made her overly happy so far, an' I doubt whether she finds that it will this time."

"We can only hope for the best, mother, and pray to the Lord to save her from herself. If she will only learn to look to him it will

come out all right in the end. Anyway, we have one another left, and we'll try to be happy here together and make the most of what is left to us.

"Now, let me make you cozy and comfortable, so that you can get along by yourself while I fly round and do up the chores. I'll have to do all the work now, and you will have to do the planning for me." Jane spoke as cheerily as possible, and did everything she could for her mother's comfort in her absence. Then with a loving kiss she went away to her outdoor work.

Mrs. Carter looked after her with tears in her eyes.

"Well, ef there's any blessin' in my life, it's in havin' a girl like Jane who finds her happiness in makin' happiness fer other people. She's learned the Lord's way fer sure."

CHAPTER XXVII.

TWO CONCLUSIONS.

THE very week after Susie's departure came another letter from Will, with a check which filled Jane's burdened heart with joy.

The letter was brief, but it held a great deal in its few lines. It said :

DEAR JANE :

Enclosed is a check for fifty dollars which I hope you will find of some help to you all. When it is gone, let me know, and you shall have more. I ought to have sent money to you long ago, only—I might as well own up—I was trying to keep every cent so as to make more, and I never could see the time when I was willing to spare any.

But I've learned that hoarding up money for one's self alone *don't pay*, and that it don't make a fellow truly happy. I have learned to believe that "The blessing of the Lord *it* maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." I have also found that to be happy, one has to be right first, and that the true way to gain happiness is *to give it away*. Forgive my past selfishness, and I will try, God helping me, to do better in the future.

Your loving brother,
WILL.

Tears were rolling down Jane's cheeks as she finished reading this letter to her mother.

"Just see how we were wronging the Lord in our thoughts, mother. He was blessing Will all the time, and we didn't know it. And just when we were despairing for ourselves he has sent us this help. Can we doubt him any more?"

The invalid was turning the check over and over. That little piece of paper meant so much to them, and it had come so unexpectedly, that she was fairly overwhelmed.

"It does look as if he was caring for us, after all," she admitted.

"I *know* it," Jane answered, brightly. "I shall not let the stump of doubt spoil my doorway any more."

Her mother looked at her in amazement. Jane saw the look, and hastened to explain her meaning. The mother's eyes were full of tears when the daughter had finished.

"I allus wondered why you chose to plant your flowers in such queer places, instid of makin' smooth beds for 'em, like other people do. But it's a pretty notion, an' the flowers do hide the stumps and make the yard look better. I'll think of it ever' time I look at 'em now."

So all through the summer while Jane was busy at her tasks, the helpless woman sat beside

the window and the flower-covered stumps preached a silent sermon to her heart.

Jane found life very busy after Susie left. Everything about the place was left for her to do. She could no longer run about the neighborhood, as young girls are fond of doing sometimes, nor go to the Landing on her accustomed trips. Teaching was entirely out of the question. So she settled down to make as much as possible from her little farm, her garden, her cows and her chickens. The wants of her mother and herself were few and simple. Medicine and medical attendance for the invalid were the greatest drain on their resources.

Jane's only fear was that sometime she herself might be taken sick, and then they would be left perfectly helpless: but she put the thought from her as unworthy of a child of God, and stayed her soul on the promise: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." With a thrill of joy she added the remainder of the text: "Most gladly, therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Her life was so busy that she had no time to fret over her narrow sphere, or the things which the Lord had denied to her. She found

her happiness in caring for her mother and in doing all she could to cheer the weary life of the invalid. If tempted to grieve over her own limitations, she shamed herself by saying: "Why should I grumble? Poor mother has to sit day after day in her chair and be racked with pain; while I am free to go everywhere to enjoy the beautiful things around me, to rest myself by exercise, and to suffer no pain. I have less than many people in the world, yet how much more I have than she can enjoy. Why should I grumble?" And so she sang about her work, and her constant smile cheered not only her mother, but all others who came into her presence.

Aunt Phrony West was faithful in her friendship, coming frequently to sit with Mrs. Carter so as to give Jane a chance to "run over and see Susie," or take a needed trip to the Landing. The trips to the Landing sent her home with an ache in her heart; for the sight of Cyrus Smith's deserted farm and vacant cabin brought up the sorrow that she had tried so hard to put away from her. No word had ever come from him except in a postscript to one of Will's letters, which said:

"Whom do you suppose I met on the streets of Wichita last week? Nobody more nor less than Cyrus Smith who used to live near the

Landing. I found he had been in Kansas for over a year, and was doing fairly well. He has a place over in the Arkansas valley, and hopes to be able to pay out on it in a couple of years if he has good crops. I'm going over to see him some of these days. I didn't know him very well when I was at home, but it was nice to see some one who had come from there lately, and could tell me about everybody."

That was all. Jane had eagerly hoped to learn more. But the meeting had soon been forgotten by her brother, and the visit to the Arkansas valley had never been paid. It was a joy to know where Cyrus was and that he was doing well, but she longed to know whether he had forgotten her, and whether he had taken her advice to "look for some other girl to take her place in his heart."

So she passed the little cabin with a sigh, and tried to forget her brief dream of love and marital happiness.

Her visits to Susie's home were not much more satisfactory than her trips to the Landing. Susie seemed happy enough in "her way," but according to Jane's ideas, there was much room for improvement in her "way," and therefore in her life. She began very nicely, taking pride in fixing up her new home, and doing everything possible to please her

husband ; and Budd put aside his careless, easy-going habits, and set to work to make a good home and a good living for his young wife.

Susie had two ambitions. The one was, to prove to Jane and her mother that she had been wiser than they in regard to her marriage with Budd Barker. The other was, to torment Mollie Dalton's jealous heart by the sight of the happiness which she had wrested from her. So she flew about and worked as she had never deigned to do at home. She took pride in her garden and in her chickens. She even followed Jane's "cranky" method of caring for her butter, and took pride in hearing people commend her for her ability and industry.

As for Budd, he plowed and sowed, and hoed and worked in every way as he had never done before. His wild habits were put aside, and he found all his happiness in his home and his wife. But with the habits of a lifetime, and the dispositions these two had cherished for years all against them, this state of things was not destined to last very long. The novelty of married life began to wear off, after a time. Mrs. Carter and Jane ceased to speak regretfully of the marriage, and Jane was confined so closely at home that she seldom could visit Susie's house to behold the evidences of her good fortune.

Moll Dalton did not long "wear the willow" for Budd Barker, but found consolation in the company of a young man from the Landing who possessed the glory of a shining new buggy. It was astonishing how frequently their rides took them past Budd Barker's house; and every such occasion planted a seed of discontent in Susie's heart.

Other young couples married, and the attention of the neighborhood gossips was turned to them, and Budd and Susie were forgotten. It made no difference now as to whether Susie had the most flourishing garden in the community, and that she received five cents a pound more for her butter than her neighbors got. Her ability and industry were of less interest than the inefficiency and idleness of some of the newer brides; and she was relegated to a place among the unnoticed women of the community. More than this, Budd ceased to notice and admire the effects of her labors. He took it as a matter of course that everything should be done exactly right. He even got so that he found fault if she failed to keep things up to the mark which she had first set for them. Once when the butter was soft and the salt not thoroughly worked through it, he rather acidly remarked that he "guessed she was losin' her grip on butter," which re-

mark did not tend either to please or encourage her. Under such conditions as these, it is no wonder that the reform in her habits was but short lived. Susie loved her husband, but she loved herself vastly more. It was one thing to put aside her selfish and idle inclinations and work hard to please Budd when he rewarded her with words of praise; and another thing, to give up her own ease to do the same things when he only found fault with her at last.

So she gradually relaxed her energies, and slipped into the careless, untidy way of doing things which had so worried her mother and Jane.

Nor was Budd one whit behind her in falling back into old habits. He soon wearied of his unwonted energy, and found it much easier to relapse into the shiftless ways of his unmarried life. Since Susie did not appear to appreciate the efforts he made in her behalf, he concluded that it was not worth while "to put himself out" so much to please her.

And so, from the fair beginning this young couple had made, they gradually relapsed into a shiftless, "do-less," hand-to-mouth existence. Their selfish dispositions caused many unpleasant quarrels, and it was not long till Jane's anxious eyes discovered that her sister's happi-

ness was far from perfect, and that the hasty marriage bade fair to terminate as unhappily as the majority of such matches. For this cause, Jane's visits to Susie's home were not productive of much pleasure to her. It grieved her to see that the young girl had thrown away her chances for enduring happiness, by snatching rashly for the selfish whim of the moment. Poor Susie had spited herself much more than she had managed to spite Mollie Dalton.

Jane's visits were spoiled by Susie's complaints against Budd for his negligence and shiftlessness, and of her own "bad luck" in having to work when she did not feel like it. It was also a grievance with Susie that she and Budd were no longer classed among the young people of the community, and that when any of the girls gave a party of any kind, no "bid" was sent to them. She was not yet twenty years old, but she found herself shut out from the gay company of her mates, and looked upon as one of "the old married women," and her spirit rebelled against it. She longed for the excitement of running here and there, and joining in the sports in which she had always taken a leading part, and chafed against the dull round of her new life.

Budd had always been the life of every

crowd, and gayest of the gay ; and Susie had thought that the home where he was an inmate would be a merry place in which to live. But now, when his work was done, he would light his pipe, seat himself in their one rocking-chair and smoke silently until his pipe was emptied, then doze off into audible slumber ; while she had nothing to do but sit down in a hard wooden chair opposite him, muse gloomily on the dreariness of her life, and wish herself back in the freedom of girlhood where she properly belonged.

By seizing selfishly for happiness, she had lost it altogether.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HOME AGAIN.

THE last two years of her college course slipped too swiftly by for Katie Carter. She had grown to love her college home with all her heart, and dreaded to leave it, and return to the uncongenial surroundings of her backwoods home.

Her heart sank as she thought of it. How could she live without the great library, the music, the art and the cultured companions by whom she was now surrounded? What was there desirable for her in that little corner amid the forests of the Hoosier hills? There was not one congenial companion. Jane was the only one of all the young people, beside herself, who had possessed any ambition for educational advancement, and even Jane was far down in the ranks of culture. Why should she go back to hoe in the garden, to milk cows and make butter, to teach a country school, in short, to bury herself in such a place? Why could she not remain somewhere near her college home, or take a place in some

institution to which her friends, there would recommend her?

The questions were forcible. The temptation was strong. Could she not help her home folks more by staying away than she could by going back? She would almost persuade herself that such was her wisest plan.

Then conscience would whisper: "You are thinking only of yourself. What do you owe to Jane? What do you not owe to her? She has given up her own opportunities, has worked and saved and taken your place at home, that you might enjoy the great privileges that have been yours. But for her self-denial you would have had to give up your course long ago. She is there alone, striving to care for your helpless mother, and at the same time make a living for them both. She can go nowhere, see nothing, learn nothing, and yet she is as ambitious as you are. Is it not just that you should go and take her place and give her the freedom that she deserves? Should you not at least go to cheer her with your help and your companionship? Even if she cannot leave home, you can help her simply by being with her and thus lightening her burden of care and loneliness. And this you should do, not because it is your duty, but from love to this sister whose love

has made possible all the good that has come to you. Will you not find more real happiness in striving to carry happiness to your loved ones than you could ever hope to obtain by placing your own desires first ? ”

Such questions as these turned the scale in the heart of this young girl who was striving to follow the path of the “ wisdom that cometh down from above.”

So when the long-desired Commencement Day was over, and the faithfully earned diploma was received, the creamy silk dress was folded away, the beloved friends bidden farewell, and Katie Carter resolutely turned her face homeward. Now that the struggle was fairly over she felt an eager desire to reach home and take up the old life again. Her heart was happy in the thought that she had decided rightly, and she began to look forward to the many things that she could do to increase the happiness of those to whom she was going.

Jane looked forward as eagerly to her sister's coming. Everything about the house was especially cleaned and beautified in her honor. It must be admitted that Jane's heart often sank under the fear that Katie would not be happy in the old, poverty-stricken home. “ She has been living in places that are palaces compared



Meeting of the sisters at the Landing.

to this. She has been surrounded by beautiful things, and refined and educated people. Will not this old log house, so poorly and roughly furnished, be unendurable to her? Will she not despise us for our ignorance and our backwoods ways? I long to see her, oh how I long to see her, but I am afraid, afraid we will not be happy together as we used to be. Oh, my little Katie, why did I send you away to grow away from me?"

Such thoughts filled the elder sister's heart as she flew about her home, making ready for the coming of the long absent one.

Susie was readily persuaded to stay with Mrs. Carter while Jane drove to the Landing to meet the boat and bring Katie home.

A tall, fine-looking man, who chanced to be a fellow-passenger on the boat, took much interest in the meeting of the two sisters at the Landing. Katie had grown to be a well-developed young woman, twenty-one years of age. Her neat grey travelling dress, with its perfect fit, set off the slender grace of her figure. Her face was fair, and her dark auburn hair was arranged in the latest and most becoming style. There was an unmistakable air of culture about her, although her dress was simple and her manner unassuming.

On the other hand was Jane, with the same hair, the same features, possibly, the same figure, but the poorly-fitting dark calico dress, heavy shoes and blue gingham sunbonnet formed a striking contrast to her sister's garb and effectually prevented all attractiveness in appearance. Her hair was drawn tightly back from her sunburned face, her ungloved hands were brown from exposure and her voice and manners were indicative of her backwoods life. The contrast was painful, but the sisters were so eager to meet that they failed to consider it. The storekeeper kindly loaded Katie's trunk into the rickety spring-wagon, and then the girls turned toward home.

There were eager questionings between the sisters as they rode along, although Katie perceived the feeling of constraint that was upon Jane and was pained to think that it was so.

She realized forcibly how far she had advanced, in one direction, beyond this sister of hers. Then came the thought, "I am far beyond her, but she is far above me. The balances are not so uneven after all."

There was so much to talk about that in spite of old Jim's plodding gait the story was not half told before they reached home.

Mrs. Carter's condition of helplessness affected Katie deeply, but she concealed her

sorrow as best she could by her loving greetings, and turned her attention to Susie.

"Do stand up and let me look at you," she cried, merrily. "I can hardly believe my eyes. When I went away you were a wild little girl in short dresses with your hair hanging in a braid down your back. Now you are a dignified married woman, with a husband and a child of your own. I declare, it makes me feel ancient." Susie laughed.

"You don't look like yourself either, with your hair done up that way, and them little curls on your forehead. Mebbe I'll git used to you after while. Your nose hain't as freckled as it used to be, neither."

"No. I have stayed indoors so much during the last four years that the sun did not have much chance to touch me. Just wait till I've hoed in the garden for a week or two; then see whether I don't look natural."

With such chat as this the first hours of Katie's home-coming were passed; then Susie declared that she must go home.

"I'll go part way with you and carry little Tilly. You'll be very tired before you get home if you have to carry her all the way yourself," Katie volunteered. Susie murmured that "Tilly was heavy, but she was used to carrying her and didn't mind," but Katie

picked up the heavy year-old baby and they set out together. They strolled slowly along for half a mile, then Katie gave up her charge to its mother and the two sisters parted.

"She's fine as a fiddle with her pretty clothes and shiny shoes an' white face an' hands, an' them little curls on her forehead; but she don't appear to feel stuck up. It's a wonder she ever come home at all, an' I'll venture to say she'll git sick enough of stayin' there. Well, she'd ought to take her sheer of it. She's allus had ever'thing, while Jane an' me never had nothin', nor no chance either. Seems like some people's born lucky, like her, an' some's born unlucky, like me. 'Tain't fair. There she is with her fine clothes an' fine airs, free to fly round jest as she chooses, an' here I am, tied down with this cross baby, an' a shiftless man like Budd Barker, with nothin' nice, an' no chance to go anywhere or do anything. 'Tain't fair." Thus Susie went grumbling on her way.

Katie had turned homeward with a heavy heart.

"Poor, foolish, mistaken child," she murmured. "Not yet twenty, and a wife and mother. She ought to be enjoying the freedom and happiness of girlhood. Instead of that, she is already a haggard and worried

woman, old before her time. I fear she is not happy. She does not look so. I hope I will be able some way to help and cheer her. What a pity it is that she did not take time to consider, and to look carefully at the prospects ahead, before marrying such a man and binding herself to such a life."

Katie had come home fully determined to take up the old home life faithfully, and make things as happy and cheery for her mother and Jane as she possibly could. If she had any lingering regrets for the congenial life she had left behind her she promptly stifled them, and no one was any the wiser for it. She did her full share of the work, giving Jane many hours of leisure; and she was so merry all the time that both her mother and Jane brightened visibly. One of Mrs. Porter's gifts to her had been a fine guitar on which that lady had been a skillful performer up to the time of her illness. She had given Katie many instructions on it, and the girl had gone on until she had become quite a good player. Her music was now a source of intense enjoyment to her home folks and helped to brighten their solitary lives.

As the weeks passed, and Katie showed no symptoms of dissatisfaction, Jane's heart lightened. It would have been an intensely bitter

thing for her, if her sister had turned from her. Even as it was there was a pain that she had continually to fight. As she looked at Katie, noted her manners, watched her graceful movements, listened to her intelligent conversation and her sweet music, she thought:

“This is what I might have been. This is the way I might have looked and talked. I might have been in her place and she might have been in mine. No, that is not quite true. She could not have done what has been given me to do here. I am not sorry. I do not begrudge her what she has and what she is. But oh, I wish I might have been like her.” It was very hard for Jane to put away such thoughts as these.

Katie sat on the porch one evening watching Jane work among her flowers.

“What has become of all the stumps, Janie? It seems to me there used to be more of them.”

“There were,” Jane answered. “But they have gradually rotted away. I suppose my constant digging in and around them, and the continual dampness needed by the flowers, hastened their decay. I have had to make beds to take their places and it looks as if they would soon all be gone.” Jane came up and sat down on the steps near her sister as she spoke.

There was a moment's pause and then Katie said, softly :

“And the other stumps, Janie, the bad temper, the selfishness, the disappointment and all the other names by which you called them—they have gone too, and only the sweet flowers of love and kindness and trust remain. Janie, the analogy is perfect. Cultivating the flowers of Christian living and loving has removed these things which you felt marred your life. Is there not a promise in that, that some day the rest will go, too?”

“It is true, it is true!” cried Jane through her tears. “O Katie, I am so glad you made me see it! If I could have had my way, I would have pulled up all these ugly stumps and there would have been great unsightly holes in their places. But God's way was to let the richness of the decaying wood nourish the flowers, while the flowers gradually took away the ugly wood, and at the last is only the smooth, rich bed. I see now *God's way was best.*”

CHAPTER XXIX.

AT MAPLEWOOD.

THE summer seemed uncommonly short to the three dwellers at the Carter house. Early in the season Katie began to consider the question of getting a school for the ensuing winter.

“’F I was you I’d try an’ get the school down to the Landing,” suggested Aunt Phrony West. “It’s a nicer place than some of these country deestRICTS, an’ you wouldn’t have to walk so fur to school. You’d hev to board down there, but then the difference in wages would make up for that. They give sixty dollars a month last winter, an’ board’s only two dollars a week; so you see you’d be a consid’able ahead on that. ’F I was you, I’d go right down an’ see to it.”

There was quite a family consultation over it; then Katie donned her pretty travelling suit, and once more travelled over the road to the Landing.

She inquired of the storekeeper in regard to the directors of the school, and found that he was one of them.

“I’d be mighty well pleased to hev you teach it, Miss Carter,” he said. “So you kin count on my vote. Jenkins—he’s the clerk—he’s gone up the river, so you can’t see him; but I’ll speak to him as soon as he comes home, an’ I think I can insure you his vote. You’ll hev to go and see Mr. Warren yourself. He’s the head director, an’ it’ll depend a good deal on him. He lives out at Maplewood. I guess you know the way?”

“Yes,” Katie answered; and thanking him for his kindness, she turned old Jim’s head in the direction of the Warren home. She felt a little timid about approaching this director. She had heard the Warrens spoken of all her life as the aristocratic people of that region. Mr. Warren, Sr., had owned several hundred acres of rich farming land along the river which had received the best of improvements. In late years an oil well had been struck, which added greatly to the wealth of its fortunate owners. On the death of old Mr. Warren the estate had been left to his wife and his only son, who still lived in the handsome home at Maplewood. It was to this Mr. Warren that Katie had been directed, and she dreaded to meet him. She had heard that he was a proud, reserved and dignified man who mingled little with the people of the district, and who found

his pleasure in the society of his mother or among friends in the distant city.

She drove slowly up the Maple avenue, and fastened old Jim to the carved stone hitching post before the door. A servant ushered her into a delightful sitting-room, where she was cordially received by Mrs. Warren who made her feel quite at her ease while she waited for the much dreaded master of the house. He proved to be grave, dignified and courteous, as she had been led to expect, but at the same time he was pleasant and cordial in his manner, which set Katie completely at her ease, and made the dreaded interview unexpectedly delightful. After a short time she took her departure, happy in the promise of the desired place. Mr. Warren assisted her into the rickety old wagon, and bowed her away as courteously as if she had been the finest lady of his acquaintance.

"He is a real gentleman," she said to herself. "I am sure he will make my school work as easy as possible."

"That is a nice little girl, Frank. Where do you suppose she came from?" Mrs. Warren asked her son when he had returned to the house.

"She lives five miles out in the country, I believe. She came down on the boat one time

this summer when I came down from L——. She did not look as if she belonged about here, and I asked Bennett who she was. She was then on her way home from college. She seems pretty clear-headed, and she has a good education; so I hope she will teach a good school. I am heartily weary of the style of teachers we have had of late. I will be relieved when my time as director expires, for it is a very annoying place. Did you notice where I placed that package of papers this morning? I'll have to work extra fast to make up for this interruption." So the teacher and the school were forgotten in the more absorbing round of personal business interests.

September found Katie installed in her school, and the work of the winter fairly under way. She boarded in the home of Mr. Jenkins, not so much because she preferred it as because she had been informed that it was expected she should stay there. "The teachers allus boards at Jenkins'," was the precedent that had confronted her. As "Jenkins" was a member of the school board, it would have been bad policy for any teacher to venture to board elsewhere.

Mrs. Jenkins was far from being a model housekeeper or a model cook. The six little Jenkinses were neither the most obedient nor

the most peaceable children in the world, and many and loud and long were the contests between themselves and with their mother. Altogether, Katie found herself in a most unenviable place, and often wished that she had been content to seek a school which paid less wages but which was not hampered by a boarding precedent.

One night she awoke, stifled and choking, to find her room full of smoke, and the air heavy with the smell of fire. She sprang from her bed, seized her few belongings and rushed downstairs, waking the family as she went. In a moment there was a turmoil of confusion amid the frightened family, and even after they were all safely out of the burning building the screaming and praying were continued. In spite of the efforts of neighbors who hurried to their assistance the old house with most of its contents was consumed. Even while she was sympathizing with the terrified and stricken family Katie breathed a sigh of relief to think that "the law of precedent" had gone up in smoke and fallen in ashes.

Mr. Warren, with several of his men, had come from Maplewood to assist the Jenkinses, and help save their property. After the building had fairly been destroyed, the gentleman went to Mrs. Jenkins and said, "My mother

told me to invite you and your family to come over to our house until you can make some arrangement for the future. We have plenty of room there, and she will give you a cordial welcome. My wagon is here, and if you will go we will get these children into it at once. They are only about half clothed, and the night is so cold that it is dangerous for them to remain here any longer. Miss Carter, my mother especially remembered you also in her invitation."

It is needless to say that the Jenkinses gladly accepted this invitation, and the whole lot was bundled into the wagon and carried over to the hospitable mansion.

"Surely Mrs. Warren does not know what she is doing for herself in inviting this rabble of children to come and make themselves at home in her handsome rooms. I wouldn't want to do it, and I'm sure I am sorry for her," thought Katie as they rode up the avenue.

Her expectations were verified ; for the meddlesome, troublesome children made much annoyance for their kind entertainers during the two days that they remained at Maplewood.

The second day after the fire Katie announced to Mrs. Warren that she had succeeded in obtaining board at another house

in the district, and therefore would not return to Maplewood that evening.

"Now, my dear, I have wanted to speak with you about this very thing," the old lady said, "but you see my hands and my thoughts have been so full of other matters that this has had to be neglected. If you think you could be contented with us, I would be very glad to have you stay here the rest of the winter. We are much nearer the school than Mr. Jenkins' house was, and your walks would not be so long."

"You are very kind, Mrs. Warren," Katie replied, gratefully. "I have certainly appreciated your generosity in taking me in during this time of need; but it would not be right for me to impose upon you any longer, when your house is already too full for your comfort," this last with a smile which the elder lady understood. "It would not be right for me to still add to your burden, when there is no longer any need of my doing so."

"But you do not add to my burden, my dear," Mrs. Warren replied, quickly. "I do not know how I could have done without your help during the hours that you have been out of school. They have been the only time when I could draw a free breath and be sure my young visitors were out of mischief."

They are all going away to-day, as Mr. Jenkins has secured a place where they can live for a time. As for yourself, I would truly like to have you stay with me. My son is away so much, or is so engrossed in business, that I am left alone a great part of the time, and your company during the hours you are out of school would be a real comfort to me. So, will you not take pity on a lonely old woman and be persuaded to make Maplewood your home till school is out?"

No prospect could have been more delightful to the young teacher, and with due gratitude she accepted Mrs. Warren's invitation.

Life was very different now from what it had been at the Jenkinses. She was surrounded by comfort and luxury, she had the privilege of cultured society and she revelled in the contents of the large library. A warm friendship sprang up between Mrs. Warren and the young girl, and they spent many delightful hours together.

On Friday evenings Jane usually came to take her sister out to her own home to spend Saturday and Sunday, and occasionally she was able to spend several hours at Maplewood. Such times were great occasions with her, for here she gained her first experience of the pleasures which wealth and education

made possible. Under such influences, and by Katie's gentle aid, the elder sister was rapidly being transformed in manners and appearance. Katie's skillful fingers arranged her hair and her dress, and Katie's cultivated taste governed her simple purchases, so that the difference between the two was no longer so painfully striking as it had been the day Mr. Warren first saw them at the Landing.

Katie's liberal wages, supplemented by Will's frequent and generous contributions, had lifted the burden of care from Jane's shoulders. She was no longer obliged to slave indoors and out to obtain a living for her mother and herself. Her time was free to care for the home and the invalid mother, to make life cheery and sweet for the sufferer; and through Mrs. Warren's kindness the treasures of the Maplewood library were opened to her eager mind. Sometimes Aunt Phrony West would come and care for Mrs. Carter for a day and give Jane a chance to spend all of its delightful hours in a visit at Maplewood. Such occasions, however, were rare; for the invalid had come to lean so much upon her daughter's company that Jane found her loath to give it up even for a day.

Susie came over occasionally; but a second baby had come to claim her time and care,

and she found little chance even to visit home. Budd seldom was willing to take the trouble to help her carry the two babies the mile that lay between the two houses, and unless she could obtain the assistance of some one else she was forced to stay at home. This state of affairs did not tend to improve her disposition nor her consequent happiness, and the greater part of her time was spent in pondering over her unhappy condition and bewailing the "bad luck" that denied her everything which she desired.

Budd was not really a bad fellow, but he was shiftless and lazy and quite as selfish as his wife. He found working for his family a great burden, and often wondered why he had been so rash in taking such care upon him while scarcely more than a boy himself.

So the two poor mortals worried along in their little backwoods cabin, and in their repining over the good which was out of their reach they failed to find happiness in the possibilities of the life they had chosen for themselves. If they had but resolved to make the most of what they had, work for what was within their reach, and make life cheery and sweet for one another and for their little ones, the happiness for which they sighed would have come to them.

Instead of that they mourned over magnified ills, fretted themselves with envious desires, wasted their time in idleness, blamed one another for their condition, made no effort at improvement and were altogether as miserable and poverty-stricken as they deserved to be.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE END OF THE ROADS.

KATIE found it hard to settle down into the old home life when school was over. She was restless, and lonely, and ill-at-ease, although she faithfully concealed it from her mother and Jane. She felt as if the woods were walls that had closed down around her, and shut out all good and desirable things. Life seemed empty, and the future was a blank.

“I do not understand it,” she said to herself one day. “Why am I no longer happy and contented? Have the comforts and pleasures of Maplewood so turned my head that I can no longer endure my own home nor enjoy the company of those I love? It was not so when I came from college, therefore I do not understand it now.”

But she understood it perfectly a few days later when Mr. Frank Warren came and told her that life had suddenly become lonely and unsatisfactory even at Maplewood, and that he could bear it no longer unless she would promise to come and make it her home for the

rest of her days. Life all at once took on new brightness and the future looked smiling and sweet. Love had glorified that which had appeared so dreary, and Katie's heart had discovered its earthly happiness.

"You need not hesitate on account of your mother and sister," Mr. Warren had said. "They shall be to me as my very own. I have abundant means and those whom you love shall never lack. If they will we will take them with us to Maplewood, but if they prefer to remain here we will see that they are well cared for."

So it was settled, and ere the summer was over Katie had become Mrs. Frank Warren and had gone to live in her own delightful home. She and Frank and Mrs. Warren tried in vain to persuade Mrs. Carter and Jane to leave the old farm and go where they could spend their days amid luxurious surroundings.

"No," Mrs. Carter said, "I hain't used to fine things an' fine ways. I'd be frettin' for my basement room before a week was out; and I couldn't no ways git along ef I couldn't set here by the winder an' watch the birds flyin' about and the squirrels a-hoppin' in the trees over yander. I'm too old to take well to new ways; so thankin' you fer your well-meanin', me an' Janie will jest stay here."

Katie used her utmost powers of persuasion to get her mother to change this decision. She urged Jane's long years of self-denial and begged her to come to Maplewood and let Jane have the freedom to order her life according to her own inclinations, but with the unreasonableness of long illness Mrs. Carter refused.

"'Tain't likely I'll live many years longer an' then Janie can please herself. She hain't so old yet as she might be, an' she'll have plenty of time to gad about after I'm dead an' gone. Will gives us plenty to live on, an' we'll do well enough. I've lived here nigh thirty years, an' I couldn't feel at home anywheres else. So, thankin' you fer your well-meanin' I'd ruther stay here."

Jane expressed much the same feeling, and assured Katie that the best kindness they could show their mother would be to allow her to remain in the home which she had loved so long. After this, life went on in the old, lonely round. Katie drove over frequently to see them. Susie came occasionally. Will's letters came once in a while, telling of his prosperity and of his home. But best news of all to Jane was his saying that in his eager search for wealth he had found the "true riches," and that by "seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," he had obtained

the happiness which is only to be found in the way of rightfulness.

Before the year was at an end Mrs. Carter's sufferings and helplessness were over and the old Carter home was again made desolate by death. This time, however, there was a comfort in the grief of those who were left behind, for they had reason to believe that through Jane's quiet influence the mother had obtained assurance of entrance into the "better mansions."

After it was all over a family consultation was held which resulted in a change of homes for Budd and Susie. It was not many days till they were installed in the Carter home and found themselves in possession of the comforts and conveniences which Jane's labor and economy had gradually effected about the place. They were so stimulated by this unexpected prosperity that, for a time at least, they seemed determined to lead a more industrious life. Jane sighed as she thought of the probable end of their good resolves, and stifled the feeling of aversion which she felt at seeing inefficient Budd Barker placed in control of the fruits of her labors.

"It is only right," she told herself. "Poor Susie has long ago paid for the rashness of her injudicious marriage. It is only right that the

rest of us should do what we can to ease the burdens that rest so heavily upon her young shoulders and brighten her life as best we may."

Katie only waited a couple of weeks till Susie was fairly established in her new home and then she came and carried Jane off.

"You have toiled and sacrificed yourself and spent your best years for the sake of one family, now you shall not take a second one upon your shoulders. It is enough for them to reap the fruits of your past labors without spoiling your future. You shall come and stay with me and be a fine lady for the rest of your life. You shall read, and study, and take your ease and enjoy yourself in every possible way. You have been the means, in God's hands, of giving me my happiness, now let me help you find yours." So Jane went to Maplewood.

For several months life slipped quietly by. The rest, the luxury, the pleasant society, the opportunities for self-improvement were very delightful to the young woman whose life so far had been a constant round of hard work and self-denial. For Jane Carter was only twenty-six years of age, and although girlhood was passed she was still in the vigor of young womanhood, and many years probably lay be-

fore her, fraught with the possibilities which the years bring to all mortals. Her life had been so very busy and independent, hitherto, that it was not possible for her to sit down in idleness for any great length of time. When the weariness caused by her former burdens had passed away she began to look about her for some new purpose in life.

"The Lord has removed all the stumps from the garden of my life and left it fair and smooth before me, but he does not expect me to sit down in idleness and allow it to grow up in weeds and uselessness. I must seek to make it fair and sweet, that those about me may see that it bears the blossoms and fruits of a Christian life," was her thought.

So she began to look about for some new field for her energies.

At first Katie opposed her but Jane answered: "In one of the books in your library I read this truth: 'It is not the monotony of life that destroys it; it is the pointlessness. Men can bear its weight, but its meaninglessness crushes them.' Happiness comes not from selfish indulgence. It is to be found only in right living and loving—in 'seeking not our own' but the welfare of others and the glory of God."

One day a letter came to her bearing the

familiar western postmark, but it was not her brother's handwriting that met her eyes when she opened it. She read :

MY DEAR JANE :

May I not call you on paper what I have called you in my heart all these years ?

Has my long silence caused you to believe that I had forgotten you and ceased to care for you ? You are dear to me to-day as you were six years ago when I begged you to go and make my home happy for me. You were wiser and better than I, Janie, for you saw that there could be but little good for one who threw aside known duty for selfish desires.

Do you think I have not known and gloried in the faithfulness of your life ? Do you think I have forgotten to pray for God's help and blessing to rest upon you ? Indeed, though I have been far away, my heart has been with you all the time and I have only waited for the glad day to come when I might ask you again to come and make my life happy.

I have worked faithfully that I might have a home worthy of you, and I have been blessed in my labors. I am not wealthy, but I have a good comfortable home, far better than the poor little cabin in the woods where I would years ago have taken you. In many ways the delay has been better for us both. We have learned much and gained much.

It is useless for me to write more. If your heart is still faithful to me it reads the faithfulness of mine, and words are unnecessary.

Will you not give me permission to come for you and bring you to the home that is waiting for you?

Yours faithfully,
CYRUS SMITH.

As her trembling hands folded the letter back into its envelope, Jane realized that here at last was a place which she desired to fill. Though this earthly happiness had been long delayed, now that it had come to her it was all the sweeter because behind it lay the path of duties that had been cheerfully fulfilled.

* * * * *

Thus by varied paths, these four members of the Carter family had travelled to the points from which they could look forward to "The End of The Roads."

Will, in his search for wealth, had found the "True Riches," and had learned that "*The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.*" In such wealth as this, is happiness and peace.

Katie had sought the path of earthly wisdom, only to find that "The fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom."

She had patiently fitted herself to labor for those she loved, and behold, instead of labor the Lord had opened up the way of worldly

prosperity, and human love, and happiness. Through them she was enabled to do more than she could have accomplished in the way which she had expected to take.

“The wisdom which cometh down from above,” which Katie found, is the key that unlocks the treasure-house of perfect joy.

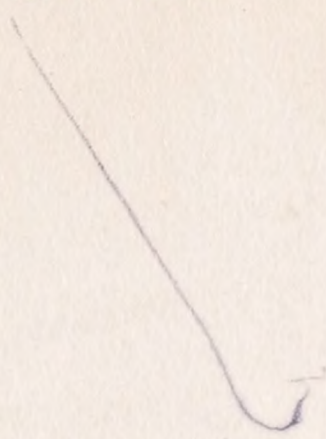
Susie—poor, foolish, selfish Susie—alone had missed the road to happiness. She had willfully turned from the paths of wisdom, kindness, and loving deeds, and sought merely to gratify her own selfish desires. Now, through much tribulation, she was learning that “He that loveth his own life (and happiness) shall lose it.”

Let us hope that through her disappointments, and vexations and cares, she learned at last to turn her feet into “The path of the just,” which is “a shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

Jane had accepted the narrow, commonplace life that the Lord had given her, had patiently surmounted its difficulties, and made the most of its limited opportunities. She had learned lessons of patience and trust, of kindness and unselfishness, of love and peace; and the stumbling-blocks of her narrow sphere had become stepping-stones to raise her to a purer and higher atmosphere.

Her life, which appeared to be cut back at every shoot, dwarfed in every ambition, poor and unsightly to the world, had become so beautified by the encircling love of Christ and good will to men, that its unsightliness was hidden by the clustering wreaths of faithful love and service, and crowned with the blossoms of love and peace. Its fruit will never all be known until the great harvest of Eternity.

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